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THOUGHTS ON  
THE LORD'S PRAYER

WORKS BY  
ELIZABETH WORDSWORTH,  
*Principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.*

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THOUGHTS ON  
THE LORD'S PRAYER

BY  
ELIZABETH WORDSWORTH

PRINCIPAL OF LADY MARGARET HALL, OXFORD

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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1898

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ASCENDAT ORATIO  
DESCENDAT GRATIA



(INSCRIPTION OVER CHAPEL DOORWAY IN JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD)



## PREFACE

THE following addresses were given at Oxford in the spring and summer of 1894, and are reprinted with but trifling alteration. It may seem superfluous to add another to the many existing works on the Lord's Prayer; but a very slight change of point of view often gives such a different aspect of any object that it seems worth while to preserve it; and in the present case some freshness of treatment has been secured by the light thrown on various petitions of the Lord's Prayer by the special teaching of the Sunday when it was under consideration. It has,

therefore, been deemed well to preserve any allusions to the services or lessons for the day, when they seemed appropriate, though, as will be seen, there was an unavoidable break due to the Easter vacation. For a somewhat similar reason a few local and personal allusions have been allowed to stand. In cases where the writer has treated a subject previously in illustrating the Creed or the Decalogue, reference will, it is hoped, be permitted to her earlier work.

In conclusion, readers are most earnestly begged to have an open Bible before them, and to *look out the texts* as they are quoted. In teaching a class, much would be gained by reading all portions of Scripture aloud as they are referred to.

LINCOLN,  
January 9, 1898.

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY (Part I.) . . . . .	I
Part II.—On the Dispositions Requisite for Prayer . . . . .	10
II. OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN (Part I.)	18
Part II.—Sonship through Christ . . .	31
III. HALLOWED BE THY NAME . . . . .	47
IV. ON REVERENCE . . . . .	63
V. THY KINGDOM COME.	
Part I.—Solomon the Type of Christ . . .	77
Part II.—Early Parables of the Kingdom . .	90
Part III.—Later Parables of the Kingdom . .	105
VI. THY WILL BE DONE.	
Part I.—Action . . . . .	120
Part II.—Suffering . . . . .	134
VII. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD (Part I.)	146
Part II.—The Bread of Life . . . . .	160
VIII. FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES (Part I.) . .	174
Part II.—The Forgiveness of Sins . . .	188
IX. LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION . . . . .	203
X. BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL . . . . .	221



# I.

## INTRODUCTORY.

### PART I.

Read Matt. vi. 1-14.

I HOPE during the present season to be able to say something about the Lord's Prayer, but before doing so, it will be well to consider the circumstances under which it has come down to us. It seems to have been given on two separate occasions, possibly on more. For it is clear that the accounts in St. Matthew and St. Luke refer to two quite different times. In Matt. vi. the Lord's Prayer is introduced as part of the Sermon on the Mount, and in combination with our Lord's teaching about almsgiving and about fasting, performed ostentatiously by the Jews, just as prayer too frequently was. In St. Luke's Gospel (ch. xi.)

we are told that as our Lord was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The Lord's Prayer does not occur in St. Mark's Gospel, but there is a very evident reference to it in xi. 25, 26, "When ye stand praying," etc.

The giving of the Lord's Prayer formed an epoch in the spiritual life of the world; and yet in a certain sense it was no new thing. Some at least of its petitions were already in use among devout Jews, just as many of our Lord's proverbial sayings, "Do not to others what you would not have others do to you," "Man sees the mote in his neighbour's eye, but sees not the beam in his own," "Charity is more than sacrifices," "God allows the poor to be with us ever," are to be found in the Talmud.

Indeed we might say there was not a word in the Lord's Prayer which could not be deduced from the Old Testament—the Fatherhood of God, the duty of hallowing His name, zeal for the advancement of His kingdom, obedience and

submission to His will, the thought how that Will is done in heaven as well as on earth, prayers for daily bread, pardon of sin, the duty of forgiving others (see, for instance, the beautiful history of Joseph), prayer to be delivered from our spiritual enemy. Not one of these ideas is foreign to the Old Testament ; most of them pervade it from end to end. But so far from this being derogatory to the position we should claim for the Lord's Prayer, it rather enhances it, and shows how much it was of a piece with all our Lord's teaching. "There shall never be one lost good," might have been inscribed as a motto for His life. He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil, to bring their scattered rays into a focus, to show clearly and definitely many things which they only imperfectly suggested. I have sometimes thought this might be illustrated by an arithmetical process. In adding up figures we all know that the tens of one column become the units of the next ; in the same way it may be said that the highest and best things of the world before Christ formed the very basis, the

elementary foundation of His teaching, to be built up upon it. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

To begin, then, let us ask, in what lay the special significance of our Lord's teaching as displayed in this most sacred prayer?

If we study the discourse that precedes it, we shall be struck with the fact that our Lord begins at the very beginning—at the very nucleus of spiritual life—in the individual soul. In treatises on prayer we are often reminded, and quite rightly, that our Lord here gives His sanction to set forms of public prayer. This is perfectly true; but we must not lose sight of the fact that though God is in this prayer addressed as *Our* Father, and though the Lord's Prayer throughout uses the plurals "we" and "us," instead of "I" and "my," and so is obviously intended for use, and has always rightly been used, in public worship, yet the primary idea is that of private, solitary,



unseen prayer. "Enter into thy closet ; shut thy door ; pray to thy Father which is in secret." Just as we are to do our alms in secret, to fast in secret, so we are to pray in secret. In the same way we find our Lord constantly retiring to pray alone (Matt. xiv. 23 ; Luke v. 16 ; vi. 12).

The first thing we are to realize is the relation between God and our own individual souls. Judaism had had a great corporate local externalized religious life ; its prophecy had been rich in promises to the nation and to the race ; it had had a round of public religious services, a temple with an elaborate ritual ; the tendency was to merge the individual in the community. I say the tendency, for it would be altogether untrue to affirm that there was no sense of personal religion among them. And this sense of individual religion was greatly developed by the exile and the consequent absence of external rites (see *e.g.* Isa. lviii. 3-13 ; and cf. Jer. vii. and Ezek. xxxiii. 7-21). But when our Lord came, the first thing that He did was to emphasize the

relation between each living soul and God. He called His first disciples one by one. He individualized them. How much there is in those words, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." A corporate religious life is worthless unless the individual be true to his professions. We love to look at a cornfield gleaming in the sun, or waving in great rich masses in the wind. How different would it appear to us if we knew that each of those golden ears, instead of being full of ripening grain, was a mere rustling pretentious piece of emptiness! How many of our churches, when filled with worshippers, would bear testing if He were to come among us as He did of old through the cornfields of Palestine when His disciples plucked the ears of corn and did eat, rubbing them in their hands? If our public worship is to be pleasing in His sight, it must be preceded by earnest, real, unhurried, undisturbed private prayer. "Enter into thy closet, shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." This is what gives the Sermon on the Mount its special

significance. It is so searching, so thorough. It will put up with no pretences, no subterfuges. It is like Death in the way it places the soul alone, unscreened, unflattered, disrobed of all conventional advantages and pretexts in the presence of God. A grand church, beautiful services, music, eloquence—all these are very helpful things if—and only if—we have first got the real spiritual earnestness which private prayer implies ; otherwise they may be mere snares and pretences. There is a great deal of dishonest, superficial prayer in the world ; and it is this which our Lord attacks. It does not show itself exactly in the way it did in the days of the Pharisees, but the spirit differs but little, it is to be feared. Forms of prayer are indispensable, but we must be perpetually filling them out with spiritual realities, or they will be mere dry husks, mere empty vessels.

But we must not stop here. It is quite true that our Lord emphasized, in giving us this prayer, the importance of the individual soul, and brought it face to face with God. This

makes it all the more remarkable that the prayer does not contain one single pronoun of the first person singular. The individual is to place himself in God's presence as unreservedly as if there were no other human being in the world, but he is not to make himself the principal object of his own prayers.

It is to be feared that, in the case of many of us, our one idea of prayer is asking God to give us something in which we have a *direct personal interest*. We appeal to God almost (forgive the phrase) in the way in which we should make a business application to a fellow creature ; we seem to think prayer is a sort of quasi-commercial transaction, and then we complain that God does not answer our prayers ! We pray when we are ill, or in trouble, or when we want to get an appointment or be relieved from an anxiety ; in fact, whenever we want our own way, and cannot get it by ordinary worldly means, and we call this consecrated (?), self-seeking . . . prayer !

How different is the whole tone and spirit of the Lord's Prayer—the most selfless prayer

that ever was uttered! And yet it is the true balm for personal sorrow, personal suffering, personal despondency. It takes us out of ourselves. It makes us feel that, however small and despised and unfortunate and miserable we are, we belong to what is great, and holy, and good, and beautiful, because we belong to God and to His Church. As the poet says—

“If I lose myself, I find myself.”

We lose the little self to find a great one. Just as a patriot is willing to die when he knows his country or his cause is victorious, because he has identified himself with it or her; so, or rather much more, is this the case with the true Christian. He prays for the mystical Body of Christ. In so doing he no doubt prays for himself, but self is not the centre round which this prayer revolves. God Himself is the centre, and we may truly say that the change produced in human thought and feeling when this prayer was first uttered is like, but far more wonderful and significant than, the

discovery which revealed to us that the sun and not the earth is the centre of our planetary system. Prayer is no longer asking for things for our personal needs, as when Ajax prayed for light, nor is it primarily asking for the good of any body of men, however venerable or beloved. The keynote of this prayer is not man, or men, or even mankind, but God, His glory, His kingdom, His will; and in order to this we pray, in the second place, that we may obtain the strength, the pardon, and the protection which are needed to enable us to realize the aspirations uttered in our earlier petitions.

Let us pause here, and then proceed to consider what our own frame of mind ought to be when we pray.

## PART II.

Read Luke xi. 1-14.

WE are told by our Lord and His apostles that there is one indispensable requisite for prayer, and that is, faith. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Or, as the apostle tells us, "He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Our belief ought to be two-fold, a belief in God's existence, a subject so vast that it is quite impossible to discuss it here; and a belief, which I know comes harder to many people, that He cares for *them*. It is so difficult to realize that the Creator of this universe *can* care for atoms like ourselves, that He *does* hear us, and that it can make the smallest difference to Him whether we pray or no. How can we conquer this difficulty? We know how Jonah was rebuked. If He could care for the gourd, could not God care for Nineveh?—not only the men and women—simple souls who could not discern between their right hand and their left—but also for the "much cattle"? Cannot *we* care for very small trifles indeed? Cannot *we* love things infinitely beneath us—things that *have not the smallest idea* we care for them? How much love one has spent on a mere inanimate object! And if God be greater than we, how much

greater must His power of caring be than ours ! Among ourselves the greater the nature, the more it can love, and the more objects for love it embraces. A great heart often goes with a great intellect—when it does not we feel it is a disgrace to humanity. The more we ourselves love, the easier we shall find it to believe in the love of God. But faith is not the only requisite. We must have repentance also—some beginning, however rudimentary, of that change of heart which makes us hate sin and long for goodness. No one can pray aright who is willingly and consciously living on in disobedience to God.

The other day I happened to come across in Pepys' Diary a description of his being present when Charles II. publicly received the Sacrament, at a time when he was living in flagrant and open sin. Such a scene makes us shudder even now ; it is, however, but an extreme instance of what too many of us are familiar with in our own lives and consciences. Yet our Lord, when He said, " If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that



thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. v. 23, 24), struck the keynote which had been so often anticipated in the Old Testament, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. xv. 8); "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (xxviii. 9; cf. Isa. i. 15). But we cannot love God without loving goodness, and we cannot pray aright if we are not trying to forsake sin.

To pray aright surely implies a realization, an acknowledgment of God, a definite devotion to Him which lifts our whole lives on to a different plane. It *must* imply some kind of self-examination, however brief; or at least an honest endeavour to listen to the voice of conscience when it reminds us of any wrong thing we have done in days past, or warns us of some temptation we are likely to incur in days to come. No one who is stifling a sin can pray

sincerely—any more than Adam could face God when he knew he had disobeyed Him. And so these two things, lack of faith and lack of repentance, play into one another's hands. We do not *quite* believe, therefore we do not *quite* repent; we do not *quite* repent, and therefore we shrink from *quite* believing. But can we afford to be half-hearted in a matter like this? Prayer is not like a subject down on one of those big lecture-lists so familiar to us here, which we can take or leave alone with impunity. You run your finger down the list, and after all it is not a matter of vital importance whether you take up classics or modern languages, or history, or science. But one cannot "take up" religion. Religion must be either first or nowhere, best or not at all, in our lives. Now let us face the alternative of a prayerless life, a life without religion.

Suppose for a moment, instead of merely being careless about our prayers, we had been told we might not and could not pray. Think of the horror of it, and gauge by that the importance of the privilege of prayer. Time

will not allow of the expansion of this subject at present, but I should like to ask you to read Browning's "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," especially the part which describes an existence, singularly fortunate, but entirely bounded by this world, in view of this thought of a prayerless life. A few words must, however, be said, not so much on the high spiritual gains of prayer, but on some of those *incidental* benefits which we may hope to derive from it.

We began by saying that prayer was to be used by each individual soul, and for each individual soul; but that praying for ourselves was a very small part of prayer. God's glory and service, our neighbours' well-being, are things we are too apt to forget, and it is partly because we are so prone to forget them and think only of self, that prayer comes so hard to us. But it may truly be said that the more prayer costs us, the more good it does us. As to saying prayer is easy, that is absurd—it is very, very hard work indeed. If your prayers give you no trouble, it is to be feared they do not do you much good. How hard it is, for

instance, when we are young and all our pulses are bounding with pleasure at the thought of some agreeable excitement, to shut it all out and to think of God ! How hard it is when we are old, and all kinds of conceivable cares and worries press upon us, and our very intercessions themselves are mixed up with our anxieties, to brush the dust off the mirror of the soul that it may really reflect the face of God ! Prayer is hard for slack and idle people, because they never can fix their minds ; it is no less hard for energetic ones, because their minds are so full of things that they seem to find no room for prayer. It is hard for dull people, because they are so slow of apprehension ; it is hard for clever ones, because the very activity of their minds distracts them. It is hard for healthy people, because they are so full of physical life ; it is hard for sick ones, because they are so full of physical pain. But just in proportion as it is hard, it does us good, just as going up a mountain does. It counteracts our wrong tendencies, it strengthens our weaknesses. Intellectually, it is the finest training the mind

can have.<sup>1</sup> It enlarges the scope of our thoughts, the range of our imaginations. To some persons it is the only way in which they ever become conversant with abstractions. In many prosaic lives it is the one gleam of poetry. In many narrow mechanical lives it is the one outlet, the loophole through which a glimpse of a greater and wider world may be discerned. If we are unsympathetic, it teaches us to sympathize; if we are insincere, it teaches us to be true; if we are frivolous, it teaches us to be earnest; if we are cowardly, it teaches us courage; if we are dull, it quickens us; if we are distracted and dissipated, it steadies us; if we are proud, it humbles us; if we are petty and mean, it elevates us. What is there that prayer cannot do for us?

<sup>1</sup> See Archbishop Benson's *Three Sermons, "Work, Friendship, Worship"* (Deighton, 1872), pp. 72-77, for an admirable expansion of this thought.

## II.

### OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.

#### PART I.

Read Isa. lvii. 15 and lxvi. 1, 2.

IF you look in a dictionary for the word "father," you will find it is identical with the Latin and Greek *pater*, and if you trace it higher up to the Sanskrit, you will find that the second syllable *tar* is a kind of vocative, and may be illustrated by μήτηρ and θυγάτηρ (mother and daughter), cf. second syllables in *brother*, *sister*, etc. Such a word as this takes us a long way back in the history of language ; and there are few contrasts more striking than the image which rises, on the one hand, in our minds of the rude infancy alike of the individual and of the race, when those syllables were first heard on human lips, and on

the other, the thought of the words *Our Father* as they are rolled out by a great body of voices in some English cathedral. I remember, for instance, being told of the funeral of the first Duke of Wellington in St. Paul's, that the roar of men's voices joining in these solemn and yet familiar words was one of the most impressive incidents of an unforgettable day. Think how from age to age, despite the divergences and differences of many Christian churches, this great Paternoster has been an unsevered link of union—existing alike for the Catholic and for the Protestant, for Greek and Roman and Teuton, for learned and unlearned, for prince and pauper; that whatever other rites or forms are practised or omitted, the Lord's Prayer is retained; that it forms part of the personal devotions, and household prayers, of every Christian home; that it is repeated by millions of little children day after day and night after night; while it is the crowning point of our Eucharists, the first words uttered by lips freshly consecrated by Holy Communion, and forms part of the last tender farewell with which we leave our dear

ones in the grave. Think of all this—and then go back once more to those old rude primitive times—those earliest times before Sanskrit and Latin and Greek were differentiated, before the great Aryan families had left those wild regions which were the cradle of their race, before a line of the “Vedas” was composed, and ages before Homer appeared. Think of the little bright-eyed children stretching out their hands to the Father, who looks back and smiles at them. What a wonderful illustration this affords of the slowly but endlessly developing resources of humanity, and, I may add, of the way our human development is met and consecrated and exalted by heavenly gifts and graces!

Now let us consider the other word—heaven. In English it probably means something heaved or lifted up. The Greek word *ouranos* is now generally derived by scholars from a Sanskrit root (var) meaning to clothe or invest, the *investing* firmament. There are four Hebrew words for heaven, which seem to convey ideas either of expanse, loftiness, or stability. In no case does there seem to be any moral



idea connected with the words. But as was the case with the word *father*, so it is with the word *heaven*. It is like the clay of which man was made at the beginning. God has breathed into its nostrils the breath of life; it has become a living soul. Let us try and get some definite conception of what we mean by heaven. In early times, no doubt, men believed in a localized heaven; perhaps many of the less educated among us do so still, just as the Greeks thought their gods lived on Mount Olympus. Even St. Paul speaks of being caught up into the third heaven; *i.e.* as early Christian writers usually interpret it, into the highest heaven; though some Rabbinical writers speak of seven. In using this expression, St. Paul employed a phrase which would be understood by his Jewish contemporaries.

But we cannot suppose that we are meant to look upon heaven as a place, but as a state. When, for instance, we read the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation we do not seriously imagine that the walls of jasper, the gates of

pearl, the inscribed foundations, the golden glassy sheen, the river of life and the trees that grow thereby, are meant to do anything but suggest things which, as St. Paul says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived." When he is caught up even into paradise, he hears unspeakable, unutterable words. Whatever heaven may be or not be, we may be sure of this, that it is something inconceivable by us, even less conceivable than to the little infant I spoke of just now would have been the glorious uses, the glorious meanings of that word, "Our Father," as they are displayed to the Christian world.

In a certain sense we may say that wherever God is present heaven cannot be very far off. Our Lord says, "He that believeth on Me hath"—(not *will* have) but hath—"everlasting life," and thus, in a certain sense, heaven is very nigh to all God's saints. But it is not till the close of the Book of Revelation, when there is a new heaven and a new earth, that the Holy City, new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven (Rev. xxi. 2). And our Lord Himself makes an antithesis

between earth and heaven in this very Lord's Prayer. "Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Earth, therefore, is not heaven, even when we are doing God's will in it. There must be some higher future state. What are its characteristics? I venture to think that the first and radical characteristic of heaven is *nearness* to God our Father, a condition of things where the Divine Presence will be immediate, and where all who partake of it will be pure, sinless, loving, perfect, and holy. There will be more to say on this subject when we come to the third petition of the Lord's Prayer; it will suffice to say now that there is a perpetual contrast going on in Holy Scripture between the revealed Presence of God on the one side, and human sin and defilement on the other. Adam and Eve dare not face their Creator because they are impure. The life of Enoch, who "was not, for God took him," is represented as a life of special holiness. Moses, when he draws near the burning bush is told to put off his shoes from off his feet (Exod. iii. 5). The high priest cannot enter the

most holy place without first making a propitiation for himself and his own sins (Lev. xvi. 11; Heb. vii. 27; ix. 7). The giving of the law is heralded by solemn purifications (Exod. xix. 10-13; cf. xxiv. 1, 2). It is death to Uzzah to touch the ark (2 Sam. vi. 7). Isaiah's lips are purged by fire (vi. 5-7). Ezekiel and Daniel are represented as awe-stricken and overpowered by contact with the Divine Presence (Ezek. i. 28; Dan. x. 8-12). Even at the Transfiguration the disciples are represented as fearing when they enter into the cloud. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," is the ejaculation of the kneeling Peter when our Lord's Divinity is miraculously revealed. And even at the hour of Christ's Passion, His Divinity flashes forth, and they who would apprehend Him go backward, and fall to the ground (John xviii. 6).

God's Presence, then, is a very awful thing. Heaven, to us, as we are now, would be inconceivably awful. We are filled with awe, perhaps, when we gaze at the stars, when we think of the magnitude of the universe, of our own

littleness, of the greatness of our Creator. But this kind of awe is, if one may so say, bearable. We can always set our own intelligence, our conscious personality, in the balance against material greatness and vastness. We feel that the intellect which enables us to learn astronomy is at all events a spark from the mind of Him who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names.

But when we think of God's holiness, the case is very different. God may pity and condescend to ignorance, but He hates unholiness and sin. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The stars are not pure in His sight (Job xxv. 5). If Heaven be the presence of God, it is high and holy, not for physical but for moral reasons. Perhaps some of us shrink from the very thought of it; not merely because it is so awful, but because we cannot people it with any concrete images. One hears people say half laughingly sometimes that they think heaven will be very dull and monotonous. Or, in our sadder and graver moments, when those we love have left this world, our minds

strive in vain to follow them into another, either into paradise, or beyond it. We look at the clothes, the books, the handwriting, the unfinished bit of work, the songs they sang, the furniture they used, and we muse over the old life and wonder what—oh what have they got now in the place of the familiar surroundings? We cannot fancy them among cold abstractions. What is that world to which they have glided so rapidly, so noiselessly, slipping through all the externals of physical being as water slips through the fingers of one who hangs his hand over the sides of a boat and lets the drops trickle away unheeded and unresisted from him?

Whatever the state of being which our word “heaven” is meant to suggest, rather than express, we may be confident, I think,

First, that it is richer, not poorer, than earth. Secondly, that it is the home of love.

Let us go back again upon that word “Father,” and observe how it illustrates this. As the ages go on we see how the rude relations between parents and children are elevated, enriched, and multiplied. Suppose, by some

magic power, we had been able to hold intercourse with a girl born in those far-away days of old. How little could we have understood her life, or she ours ! Her father would have loved, perhaps, and protected her, taken a certain pride in her ; she would have learnt primitive household duties, taken an innocent pleasure in her life and its adornments ; perhaps she would have been given in marriage in exchange for cattle or other possessions, or to cement an alliance between two warlike tribes. If we had tried to describe to her the life of a modern English girl, it would have been unintelligible to her. Think what the word father means to you and me. It implies not merely blood relationship, but intellectual sympathy. Well we know that many a girl sitting in this room to-night has been first led to care for art, or history, or scholarship, by her father's example and teaching. And our fathers actually develop in us tastes and faculties which in childhood we did not know we possessed. Children do not always want, for instance, to be taught to read. But their

fathers know that those little baby heads have got brains inside them which in days to come will respond to what books are able to teach them. They know us, and what we are capable of, better than we know ourselves. Just so with spiritual things; they taught us our prayers, or had us taught long before we knew the meaning of many of the words. They knew a time would come when we should *want* to pray! I need not pursue this subject. The question we have to ask ourselves is, Do closer and fuller and more sacred relations with an earthly father make life richer or poorer? Is the fact that much of our intercourse with an earthly father is intellectual and spiritual makes life duller and emptier, or the contrary? How then is it likely to be with our Heavenly Father? Again, are we worse or better off in homes where the father is good, and loves goodness, and is intolerant of evil? Even if he be severe on wrong-doing, should we not be happier with a good father than a bad one? How does this apply to God and Heaven? Once more, which home are we likely to be happier in—



a home which only provides for bodily needs, or one in which we receive high spiritual training? Or, again, a home in which there is nothing to learn, no progress, or a home in which we go on learning and improving day by day?

You could not explain to a rough savage the pleasure you took in visiting a picture gallery, or hearing fine music, or reading poetry with your father; but that does not make the pleasure a whit less real. Just so it is with our Heavenly Father, and the spiritual joys He gives us. We have to be trained to enter into them. But who that had once tasted the higher life would ever wish to go back to the lower? Again, as you grow up you have gained fresh insight, in a way a savage could never do, into your father's mind and character. Some of us at least have known fathers of whom we may say that, to the very last moment of our intercourse with them, we never fathomed all that was in them. This very afternoon, since I began writing this address, two American gentlemen, perfect strangers to me, came to call, and one of them—pardon the personal

reference for the sake of the illustration—told me with enthusiasm of the value they, in America, placed on some of my own father's writings, and how they had one particular copy thickly scored with pencil marks. Ah (one could not help thinking), if the mind of an earthly father is so rich, and one is allowed to see something of it as one grows to maturity one's self, what is that to the mind of our Heavenly Father, when this earth is meant to be but as it were a nursery where we see Him fitfully and from time to time, but heaven is the place where the matured and purified soul, the soul which has been trained by trial and taught by example, and developed by its spiritual education here, will be brought into closest intercourse with Him? As to-day's Epistle<sup>1</sup> tells us, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which was in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a

<sup>1</sup> Quinquagesima Sunday.

man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known " (1 Cor. xiii.).

## PART II.

### SONSHIP THROUGH CHRIST.

Read Eph. i. 1-11.

I HAVE asked you to read these beautiful words because they form an admirable introduction to the present part of our subject.

It seems necessary now to say something of the specially Christian sense in which we may call God our Father, and this is best understood if we consider the double Sonship of our Lord as revealed to us in the New Testament. Just as in the first chapter of St. Matthew we have the human name, Jesus, and the Divine name, Emmanuel, both ascribed to Him, so throughout the Gospels (and this is one of many noticeable links between St. John and the Synoptists),

the affirmation of our Lord's Humanity, and the teaching concerning the kingdom which He founds as Son of man is closely connected with that of His Divine Sonship. Take, for instance, the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew, where John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" We have our Lord speaking of Himself as "the Son of man" (the Son of man came eating and drinking), and a few verses later He addresses God as His Father (vers. 25-27), and says, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." In the next chapter (xii.) He reminds us that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath day (ver. 8), that blasphemy against Him is not incapable of pardon (ver. 32), that He shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (ver. 40). But the chapter ends with a reference to His heavenly Sonship, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven,

the same is My brother, and My sister and mother." It would hardly be too much to affirm that just as our Lord's greatest miracles are usually accompanied by some indication of His Humanity (*e.g.* John xi. 35), so the expression "Son of man" is never applied to our Lord without its being preceded or followed by something that implies His being also the Son of God (Cf. Matt. viii. 20-29; ix. 6; xvi. 13, 16, 17; xviii. 10, 11; xxvi. 63, 64; John i. 49, 51; v. 19-27; vi. 27-62, 68, 69), and if arguments were needed for the genuineness of St. John's Gospel, I think this silent agreement with the other evangelists on so important a point by no means an insignificant one.

Our Lord is Son of man, not son of any one man; and we may notice the contrasting expression, applied to John Baptist (Matt. xi. 11), "Them that are born<sup>1</sup> of women"—born, that is, in the ordinary way. This word "Son of

<sup>1</sup> Ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν. He who is "made of *the* woman"—the Seed of the woman (cf. Gen. iii. 16, with Gal. iv. 4; γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικὸς) is the true Messiah.

man," used absolutely as here, is never in the New Testament referred to any one but Christ. In the Old Testament Ezekiel is frequently so addressed—but *the* Son of man is always the Messiah, as in Dan. vii. 13 ("one like the Son of man"<sup>1</sup>) and as such it is referred to (Matt. xxvi. 64) just after our Lord on being adjured by the High Priest has testified that He is the Son of God. It is clear that this remarkable expression is the watchword or key-note of the Incarnation. Round those two words "*Filius Hominis*" may be grouped all that part of the teaching of our Creed which relates to the manhood of Jesus Christ. Unquestionably the Son of man is more than any mere man, however great, who has ever existed, or can exist. He is the Sum and Head, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all humanity. As St. Paul says, "We are complete

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel is addressed as "Son of man" Ben-Adam—about eighty times in his prophecy and (so many other passages) but the Messiah in Dan. vii. 13 is *Bar-enosh* "Son of man" (with a connotation of *weakness* and *humility*). The eighth Psalm has ("what is man" (enosh) and the "Son of man" (ben-adam) in ver. 5, and cf. Job. xxv. 6, where both words occur).

in Him" (Col. i. 15, 17, 28; ii. 10; Eph. i. 10, 11, 22, 23, and many other passages). But we must never dissociate the idea of Christ's human sonship from His Divine one. This very Epistle to the Ephesians opens with the beautiful words which we read at the beginning of this address, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

It is because Christ is both Son of man and Son of God that He tells us to call His Father our Father. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven," is a text (Matt. vii. 21) which comes very soon after the giving of the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. It is through Christ that we are made partakers of the Divine nature, that, as the Collect for Christmas Day reminds us, we are "regenerate and made God's children by adoption and grace." Just as when a noble Roman adopted a son into his family he did not do away with

the old brotherhood of man, which unites all men together, but built up a closer and higher relationship upon it, so it is with God adopting humanity in Jesus Christ. There was, if we may say so, a natural relationship before ; now there is a special one. God adopts us of His own free will, but we, in order to benefit by the adoption, must ourselves be consenting parties. Still there remains, and always will remain, a distinction between the only begotten Son and the children by adoption. This is brought out by another point which we may now observe. So far as I know no man or woman in the whole of the Old or New Testament ever addresses God as *My* Father, though such phrases as "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 3), or "I thank my God through Jesus Christ" (Rom. i. 8 ; cf. 1 Pet. i. 3) are common enough ; and our Lord, though He bids us say "*Our* Father" when we pray, and speaks of God as "*your* Father," and even says, in Matt. vi., "*Thy* Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly," clearly shows us that there is a distinction between the sense in which



*we* may be said to be sons of God, and that in which *He* is the Son of God. Especially is this connected with the *Ascension* (John xx. 17). Just as he is (if it may be said so without paradox) more completely and wholly Human than any one human being who ever lived, because *all* humanity is summed up in Him, so He is unapproachably and perfectly divine; we are made partakers of the Divine nature in and by Him (Heb. ii. 11; 2 Pet. i. 4), and all God's gifts are given us through Him (John vi. 27, 57; viii. 28; xiv. 6).

We can only call God our Father because we are one with Christ, the Son of man, who is in a sense in which no mere mortal man or woman can be, the Son of God. This is brought out in our Baptismal Service (based on 1 John ii. 29; iii. 1, 2, compared with John i. 12; iii. 3, the Gospel in the Baptismal Service for Riper Years), especially in the prayer beginning, "Almighty and everlasting God, heavenly Father," etc.

We shall speak next time of the various

names in which God was revealed to us in the Old Testament ; it was reserved for our Lord to reveal Him to us as our Father, in the fullest sense of that sacred word.

But it will doubtless be said here, "This is very narrow teaching ; it seems to limit the fatherhood of God to a small section of humanity," and we shall be reminded of many striking passages in great non-Christian poets and dramatists where appeals are made to God the great Father of all. And this not only in classical literature, but in the literature, however rude, however remote, of almost every nation of the world. We shall be asked, "Are you going to deny to the great races, the sublime poets, the illustrious thinkers outside Christianity the right to look upon God as their Father ? May we not hear the echoes of Homer's voice in the Lord's Prayer ? May not the deep tones of the Vedas or the rude notes of the old Scandinavian bards, or of some even less civilized races, mingle with this great, this universal appeal of humanity to Him who hath made of one blood all nations of men ?" Assuredly

they may. Heaven forbid we should deny it ; in so doing we should be impoverishing our own spiritual life. So far from this being the case, the universal Fatherhood of God was emphasized anew by Christianity. "Doubtless thou art our Father" meant something very different to the Jew of Isaiah's day from what it does to Christians. Both Jew and Gentile acknowledged the Fatherhood of God, but they realized it but dimly when compared with "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "God," says St. Paul, "is the Father of all men ; specially of those who believe." As I said not long ago of the very words of the Lord's Prayer as a whole, they are not new things, but old things endued with new force, new life, new meaning, by Him who has come to make all things new. Natural religion had many things in it, true and good so far as they went, but capable of being carried very much further. Let me give an illustration from that deservedly well-known passage in the *Prometheus Vincit* which adumbrates in a startling way the story of a far greater Deliverer.

What has this suffering divinity done for humanity?

In a striking and unforgettable speech, he says that he has given them the great gift of fire, he has set blind hopes to inhabit in their house, he has taught them the arts of life, husbandry, shipbuilding, augury, medicine, and the like, instead of leaving them in a condition which he describes almost in the very words of Scripture, βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην, κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον—when seeing they saw not, and hearing they heard not, but like shapes in dreamland, groped and blundered away their time, dwelling in sunless caverns. So far as the Greeks believed that mankind was to have a Divine deliverer and benefactor they were on the right road, but their minds never travelled beyond this earth. They were feeling after something—after a great and important truth—but contrast the hopes given by Prometheus with any one text in the Bible which speaks of what Christ has done for us, and we shall feel as if we had passed from twilight to midday. Just in the same way with regard to the Fatherhood of God. Instinct and

Natural Religion tell us something, but how little by comparison with revelation! Viewed merely in the light of what nature teaches us, the idea of the Fatherhood of God, though on the whole we are disposed to accept it, is involved in some perplexities which many minds have found insuperable. One of the hardest questions a student of Christian evidences has to deal with is the reconciliation of all the pain and horror in the world with the idea of a benevolent Deity. Our Lord Himself says, God makes His sun to rise alike on the evil and on the good. Apparently the good man is no more favoured by nature than the bad one. Now, let us own quite frankly that there *is* pain and cruelty and injustice in the world, that the innocent often have to suffer, that children have to suffer, that slaves have to suffer, that there are famines and tortures and horrors of all kinds to be heard of as existing this very day. But once look in the face of Jesus Christ, once believe that the Son of God is also Son of Man, and you have, if not the solution, at all events a very considerable light thrown on the problem

of evil. Whence evil came, and how far things are what they are in consequence of the Fall, is not to be discussed now or here.

Anyhow, the fact is plain that evil exists. God *does* know of it. He condescends even in the Person of Christ to have experimental knowledge of it. He cannot as God suffer, but He is willing to become man that He—as man—may suffer, and in His human nature is even said to be made perfect through suffering, and actually to *learn* from it ἐμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἐπαθε. How different pain looks when we see that God in Christ recognizes it, endures it, battles with it, overcomes it; when we know that every throb of pain that is felt by those who know and love Him—may we not add by those who *would* love Him if only they knew Him?—is an identification of their suffering with Christ, a recognition that there is a higher kingdom than this kingdom of earth, namely, the kingdom of heaven of which our Lord spoke in that eleventh chapter of St. Matthew, a life lived by the faith of the Son of God, who was also Son of man, and who loved

us and gave Himself for us? Sometimes in reading books of a well-meant but purely theistic type you may have felt that the author condescends to something very like special pleading in order to get rid of the difficulty pain and evil present to all such thinkers. "Pain is due to carelessness, accident, neglect of laws of health—has been exaggerated—doesn't hurt some people so much as it does others," etc., etc. We read these books and think them very clever, but they are small consolation to us next time we are in bad pain ourselves. They do not seem somehow to quite cover the ground.

But what a proof it is of the truth of Christianity, that it never for one moment shirks the fact of pain, or denies or apologizes for it. The ideal, the essential Human Being, the Son of man does not go through the world without suffering; very far from it. It is true that His pure and perfect Body is not only free from disease, but by its very contact gives health to others; but it possesses no immunity from hunger, thirst, weariness, exhaustion, tears. It

is highly sensitive to pain, and it is called upon to endure terrible pain.

What a new light is thus thrown on the Fatherhood of God! He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things? Ay, those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

How different, too, is this conception of God the Father from that (true as far as it goes) of a benevolent Providence, giving us the good things of this world, but constantly allowing our theory to break down by some unaccountable visitation of famine, epidemic, or earthquake? Whereas, when we see the Father as revealed by Christ, we look beyond and above this life altogether. What a conception such words give us of the new and wonderful blessings of which suffering holds the key! For the joy that was set before Him, our Lord endured the Cross. Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness—but to every one that believeth Christ, the power of God and the



wisdom of God. Wonderful, unfathomable words! When we are made sons of God by adoption, we are made free of a new world. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

I cannot end this address more appropriately than in those magnificent words, endeared to some of us as they are by beautiful music (1 Pet. i. 3-8; 22-25), "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and that fadeth not away . . . wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. . . . And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear . . . who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and

gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God," and reminding us that if God is our Father we must love one another as brethren and sisters in Him (v. 22).

### III.

## HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

Read *Exod. iii. 1-16.*

HAVE any of us, in reading or repeating these words, ever been tempted to pause and ask, why do we say, "Hallowed be Thy Name," and not "Hallowed be Thou"? The answer is not far to seek. I think I may explain it by a little parable of common life. Supposing you are furnishing a house, and your room is perhaps rather a dark one, possibly in London or some place where your object is to get as much light as possible. You say to yourself, "Well, I must make the most of every ray of sunshine I can get. My wall-paper must be white and yellow, my doors and panels of some light tint. I must have clear glass in my windows, perhaps a mirror or a skylight in the room." And you think to yourself how vexatious it is when there is the sun up in the sky, so bright, so powerful,

and that in some countries at this very moment it is even overpoweringly hot and bright, that your circumstances are such, what with the climate and the fogs, and the aspect of the house, and the great building opposite which shuts off so much of the little light there is, that, when all is done, your room is but a dim corner of the world after all. Now, God is like the sun ; nothing that we can do can add to or diminish His greatness and His brightness. He is eternally the same ; it is we and our earthly hearts that bedim and dull His light. With the essence of God we can have nothing to do ; but His Name, that by which He is known to us, may be hallowed or profaned, just as we may or may not admit and cherish the sunbeams in our houses.

Absolutely, God *cannot* be dishonoured by us ; relatively, He can. We can make much or make little of His revelations of Himself to us. So it is with other external manifestations and representations of power. An insult offered to the British flag is an insult offered to the British name, and so to the nation itself. You

will remember in Scott's novel how Leopold of Austria insulted the banner of Cœur de Lion. It is not a difficult thing to pluck down a standard, or to tear a piece of coloured rag, but if so doing means to affront a great strong nation or an invincible monarch, those who do it had better beware of the consequences. We *cannot* take away one iota of real glory from Almighty God, but we may insult Him in His Name, that is in those outward ways in which He has chosen to reveal Himself.

Let us now consider a little more closely the different names by which God reveals Himself at different stages of human history in Holy Scripture. Just as we saw in the case of the Lord's Prayer that the foundations of religion must be laid in the individual, so it is here. God first reveals Himself to Abram as the God of an individual, and as El Shaddai, the Mighty God (Gen. xv. 1 ; and again xvii. 1). In neither of these places, we may observe, does the name Jehovah<sup>1</sup> occur. And this will help

<sup>1</sup> As given by God *to Himself*. (But Abraham says, xv. 2, *Adonai Jehovah*, and Jehovah is said to appear to him. Cf. xii. 1.)

to explain a very difficult passage—Exod. vi. 2, “I appeared unto Abraham,” etc., quite literally, “I am Jehovah, and I showed Myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in (or *as*) God Almighty;”<sup>1</sup> but by My name Jehovah I made not Myself known to them.” Yet the Name was called upon even before the Flood (Gen. iv. 26), and occurs repeatedly in the early part of Genesis, as in the very narrative (Gen. xvi., xvii.) just quoted. We must, however, remember that the Book of Genesis, as we have it, is much later than the time of Abraham, and that it is common enough in all literatures to use contemporary phraseology in speaking of earlier events. The meaning of the passage seems to be that the revelation of God to the patriarchs as Eternal and Self-Existing and Omnipresent, the *inner meaning* of the word Jehovah, was by no means so clear and full as it became in and after the days of Moses. The idea that was first to be emphasized was that of God’s might or power. How natural this is! How like what happens even now! The *power* of God

<sup>1</sup> *El Shaddai*, cf. Gen. xvii. 1.

is the first thing that we realize in the natural world ; it strikes even a child's or a savage's mind. We realize God's omnipotence much sooner than His omnipresence. We think of Him as *doing*, before we think of Him as *being*.

But we are not allowed to remain at this stage. We shall see this when we look at our next passage, Exod. iii. 14, where we have the fuller revelation of God as Existent and Consistent, as God from all eternity, and to all eternity, and as the God of the whole house of Israel.

This, too, is very like what happens in the progress of human thought. We realize the existence of our spiritual selves after we have realized physical phenomena ; we conceive of God as a self-existing Being above and apart from phenomena, long after we have thought of material objects or natural forces as having Divinity inherent in them.

But there is a third revelation of God in this Book. The mere name of God as I AM, taken by itself, tells us nothing whatever of His moral and spiritual nature ; it tells us of His eternity

and His essence, as El Shaddai does of His power. But now read Exod. xxxiii. 12 ; xxxiv. 1-8. God is revealed as making all His *goodness* pass before Moses, and as a gracious and a merciful God. No man can see His face and live, yet, in some mysterious sense His presence is to go with Moses and He will give him rest. The early fathers loved to see in this clift of the rock in which Moses was sheltered a type of Christ our Rock—the Rock cleft for us at His Passion—in Whom and by Whom alone we can be brought near to God.

How beautiful, how sublime is what follows about the Divine Name : “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, even upon the third and fourth generation.” What an advance this is upon any previous revelation of the Divine Name! How much it gives us to think about,



and how consonant it is with the gradual way in which mankind has been taught that God is not only mighty, not only eternal ; but that God is good, and that God is love !

But there is in the Old Testament another very remarkable revelation of God's Name to the heathen world, and it coincides with all those already quoted in one singular respect. Not only does God in each instance proclaim His own name, but He names the person to whom He speaks by *his* name. In Gen. xv. Abram (not Abraham) is so addressed. In Gen. xvii. (see ver. 5) God's revelation is specially connected with Abraham's *change of name*. In Exod. iii. Moses is twice addressed by his name. In Exod. xxxiii. 12, 17, God twice says, "I know thee by name." Why was it, we are tempted to ask ourselves at this point, that in the case of Jacob, no new revelation of the Divine name was vouchsafed ? God calls him by his new name of Israel (Gen. xxxii. 28), but when he exclaims to the Being who wrestled with him (ver. 29), "Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy Name"—he obtains no reply. "Wherefore dost

thou ask after My name.”<sup>1</sup> And He blessed him there. It seems as if the world was not yet ripe for a fuller revelation of God, such as we have just seen vouchsafed to Moses. Now if we turn to Isaiah xliv., immediately after a withering denunciation of idol worship, some one outside the chosen people is specially called by name—I think a unique distinction in Holy Scripture—namely, Cyrus (xliv. 28 ; xlv. 1-7). God calls Cyrus by name, and then reveals Himself. “I am Jehovah, and there is none beside Me.” The Persian religion of dualism, the belief in Ormuzd and Ahrimanes must give way to that in the One true God. “I form the light and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil. I, Jehovah, do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness : let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together ; I the LORD have created it. Look unto Me, and be

<sup>1</sup> The reader may like to be reminded of Charles Wesley’s noble hymn, “Come, O thou Traveller unknown,” and its fine concluding thought.

ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Surely, shall one say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa. xlv. 22-25).

What may we learn from these passages? How do they affect us?

To begin with. We, too, have all been called by God by our names. Some of you will, I dare say, have noticed those promises in the Apocalypse (Rev. ii. 17), "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it," and iii. 12, "I will write on him My new name." Also iii. 5, "I will not blot his name out of the book of Life, but I will confess his name *before My Father*, and before His angels." The more we know of God, the more reverence we ought to feel for ourselves. It is not without a deep significance that the first time we were ever—most of us—taken to

church at all, our name was pronounced aloud by the priest, as in the Name of Jesus Christ he took us into his arms. I have always been glad that in this house we have never dropped the habit of Christian names. Surely even when those names are uttered on all the ordinary occasions of daily life, there is a kind of atmosphere of holiness which breathes around them. The baptismal name often in itself has some beautiful meaning or some sacred memory, which in our quieter moments we love to dwell on; at all events it is a constant reminder to us that in God's sight we are not only members of a body, but also objects of His *individual* care, and that He says to us, as He said to Abraham, "Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." When we pray, then, "Hallowed be Thy name," ought we not to pray that we should reverence God in His relation to our own individual souls, and should love and trust Him with all our hearts; and I may add, should reverence *ourselves* as His children, and do nothing unworthy of our Christian name? We should think of

God as El Shaddai, the mighty One. One who is able and willing to support and succour us on our earthly pilgrimage, as He did Abraham of old ; we should try to copy Abraham's steadfast faith and trust in God.

Next we think of God as He showed Himself at the burning bush to Moses—as Jehovah, the Everliving One.

Do we meditate as we ought upon the Being, the Eternity of God? It is indeed an awful and yet a most sustaining thought. You see mediæval pictures sometimes of the Magdalen, or some holy hermit, with a skull beside them—thinking of human mortality. Truly a miserable idea of religion. The flowers and grasses at their feet, the clouds over their heads are better preachers, lifting as they do the heart from thoughts of self to Him in whom we live and move and have our being. The belief in an Eternal God is, as I have said, a *sustaining* one in all earth's troubles. This very morning some of us were having a talk about the horrible state of Europe, cruelties, injustices and barbarities, which we shudder even

to name. This was just the frame of mind in which Moses saw the burning bush. He had been terribly pained and distressed in his mind by the brutal treatment of his countrymen in Egypt, his heart burnt within him with a sense of injustice. For a long time he had been hindered from rescuing them; when he was sent to do it, it was when, and not till when, God saw fit.

But think of those great words I AM. Think of the Eternity of God. A time will come when years of miserable exile will seem as nothing when compared with eternity. A time will come—it has come already—when all the pleasures and treasures of Egypt displayed to Moses will be nothing. What are they now? Walk into any museum and ask the painted coffins, the swathed and blackened limbs, with scarce-human shapes, the quaint blue ornaments and toys, the idols and amulets of a speechless and long buried race. But He who was I AM then, is still I AM.

When we think of God's Name, let us therefore pray that we may reverence Him as Ever-

living, and look on all things in the light, not of Time but of Eternity. It is the only way to obtain steadiness of gaze, and sense of proportion, and to deal with things of Time as God would have us to do.

Next we come to that most beautiful revelation of God to Moses on the rock as a long-suffering, and merciful, and forgiving, and yet a just and righteous God. Do we dwell, as we ought to do, on the thought of God's mercy? Are we grateful enough for His Love? If we prayed the Lord's Prayer aright, would it not help us to see God's hand in all our blessings; to be far, far more grateful for them than we are; to feel more than we do the amazing *wonderfulness* of His great forbearance and pardoning love, and also—let us not lose sight of *that* aspect of His character—to keep before our minds the thought of His righteousness, and His hatred of sin? I fear very few of us hallow God's Name as we should in *that* way—by remembering that every wrong thing we think or say or do is really an insult and a desecration of that most righteous Name.

He will by no means clear the guilty. These are not idle words—not a mere parenthesis.

Then there is God's revelation of His Name to Cyrus, the revelation of Himself in His unity, the revelation of Himself, as the God not only of the Jews but of the Gentiles, and the revelation of Himself (we seem already in these words to see the beginning of the Christian Dispensation) as the giver of pardon and righteousness and salvation. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Have we not sometimes seen these words over a figure of Christ crucified? This beautiful chapter of Isaiah is like one of those sunrises many of us see at this season out of our windows—the sky is reddening, the light is beginning, the sun is all but visible. Looking back on it afterwards we knew that gleam, that glow, was caused by the sun; we interpret it, and truly interpret it, after the event; we interpret it of Christ. When we say Hallowed be Thy Name, let us ask God to help us to remember that He is the one God and the *only* God. We talk of the dualism of the



followers of Zoroaster, the belief in a good and evil principle, as a thing of the past. But is it so? "All these things will I give Thee," Satan says to our Lord, "if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Is there no *cultus* now of Ahriman as well as of Ormuzd? Do we never bow before the powers of evil? What is our lack of moral vigour, our slowness to range ourselves on the right side, our lack of sincere honest, Christian courage, but a kind of survival of the worship of a power which Christ has once and for ever put under His feet? When we say this petition, then, we ask God to cure us of all half-heartedness, all timidity, all instability, and double mindedness in His service, and for grace to live as if we really believed the words, "I am the LORD, and there is none else beside Me."

Although what has been said is a very insufficient sketch of a great subject, yet I fear it is likely that some may say after hearing this address, "Well, it is all very true, but who can expect us to think of a quarter of this when we say the Lord's Prayer? We should never

find time for it." In answer to this I would say first that it is not a bad thing sometimes in our private prayers to make a little pause between each petition and gather up our thoughts. We should find the Lord's Prayer so used a perfect manual of devotion in itself. Secondly, that as the Lord's Prayer recurs frequently in the Church service, we might say such a petition as this with a somewhat differing intention at different times. We might pray for grace to reverence God in our individual relation to Him, or (as members of the Church) that *all* Christians might do so. We might reverence Him as eternal, as righteous, as merciful, in His unity, in His sole supremacy, and see how each of these ideas bore practically on our lives. I have said nothing of mere *externals* of reverence.<sup>1</sup> If we once feel the awe and love of God in our hearts, if we trust and fain would serve Him as we should, there will not be much danger of our falling short in outward observances.

<sup>1</sup> May I refer, however, to my book on "The Decalogue," especially on the third and fourth commandments?

#### IV.

### ON REVERENCE.

Read Gen. xxviii. 10-22.

ON previous occasions we have tried to think of what was meant by the name of God, as revealed to the early patriarchs by the name of Almighty, and of Abraham's shield and great reward of the name of Eternal as revealed at the burning bush ; the name of Merciful and Just, as revealed to Moses in the mount, the name of the one and only God of Jew and Gentile alike, the LORD our righteousness, as revealed to Cyrus, while in another address something has been said with regard to the name of the Father<sup>1</sup> of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospels.

<sup>1</sup> See Lect. II.

To-night I should like to speak of the subject of Reverence generally. It suggests a most interesting train of thought, and I hope will be helpful to us in more ways than one.

The complaint is sometimes made that the age in which we live is one in which there is very little reverence. This complaint is perhaps justifiable, but it may be doubted whether the cause usually assigned for the fact is the right one. Reverence seems to be looked on by many people as the daughter of ignorance. Tennyson was no doubt thinking of this popular notion when he wrote—

“ Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell.”

As if he thought that in many minds knowledge and reverence were likely to be opposed.

It is, of course, true that superstitious awe does vanish with the growth of knowledge. We have ceased to believe in charms and spells ; many superstitions mixed up with the externals of religion have disappeared, though I dare say even now those of you who have seen much of rustic life in out-of-the-way

country villages will have some quaint stories to tell of old-fashioned, half-Christian, half-pagan beliefs which still linger among the poor. But the mistake very commonly made is when people rush at a conclusion that because some things which they or their forefathers have believed are foolish, it is foolish to believe anything at all. A very slight acquaintance with what considers itself "enlightened" society in France or Italy will show how few persons are capable of discriminating in these matters; and it is very greatly to be feared that the case is even worse with high-caste natives of India, to whom we have given and are giving literary culture and polish without faith.

But I do think it is true that modern life is deficient in reverence; and I should assign as a cause, not its knowledge, but its hurry, its ignorant shallowness, and its selfishness. How hard it is to keep any idea of God alive in our minds when we are always rushing off to engagements, reading for examinations, struggling, perhaps, for a livelihood, occupied in work that must be done as we say "against

time," catching trains, hurrying off letters and telegrams, and by the end of the day too tired to think at all! Our minds are in a constant state of preoccupation. We, perhaps, still own that God exists, or, at all events, are not prepared to deny His existence, but that is about all. As to forming any ideas of His attributes, and of what He is able and willing to be *to* us, and of what He is able and willing to make *of* us, we have as little, or less idea than Jacob had, when, in the chapter we have just read, he lay down an outcast from his home, a hunted, weary, anxious man, with no shelter but the almond trees from which Luz takes its name, and no pillow for his head but one of the rude stones of the wayside.

I am not now going to speak of the wonderful vision vouchsafed to Jacob there—a looking onward to the Incarnation itself, as Christ Himself has explained it to us; but merely to dwell on the fact that, if we are indifferent to God or irreverent, it is not due to our knowledge, but to our ignorance; not to our enlightenment, but to our dulness and slowness of heart.

This may be illustrated by an analogy. If we are very dull where God is concerned, we are hardly less dull where our neighbour is concerned. We say we know a person; and this, in nine cases out of ten, means we know him just as far and no further than as he is agreeable or disagreeable to ourselves, kind or unkind to us. We know our neighbours if they are rivals to us—just that aspect of their character forces itself upon us—we know them if they confer benefits upon us, or are of use to us; in these cases, of course, we are really grateful to them sometimes, but how seldom are we alive to their character as a whole! We do not walk round them, we just look at them out of our own windows.

A few days ago some one was complaining to me of a very distinguished man whom he was in the habit of meeting from time to time. "So-and-so always used to make the same remark whenever he met me, and we never got any further." The remark in question was a courteous and kindly one, but perfectly obvious, and almost conventional. There is something

irritating when a man of great ability has not sufficient knowledge of his friend's character and tastes, or is too lazy to get beyond conventionalities ; but it is what we are all doing every day. Coarse, half-physical sympathy is common enough. Fine, intelligent sympathy is the rarest of rare plants. We laugh at the *femme incomprise*, and she is generally a weak and silly person ; but there is a vast number of men and women whom nobody takes the trouble to comprehend, and who are very far from foolish or weak. How very few people, for instance, possess the power of describing, with any touch of individuality, persons whom they have known ! Take the case of a literary man who has been asked to write a biography. He will tell you that it is disappointing, ludicrously disappointing, to find how few so-called "intimates" could give him the least idea of what the man or woman was like. In some instances the only thing the speaker could recover was a compliment paid to himself, or some circumstance so trivial that it reminded one of Dr. Johnson's inquiries about the poet



Dryden, only eliciting the fact that he had an armchair by the fireside in winter, and a seat by the window in summer.

But what has all this to do with Reverence? Just this; that there are very many people in the world for whom we should feel much higher regard if we *realized* them more than we do. But the fact that we do not realize them does not make them one whit the less worthy of regard. Great people are not less great, good people not less good, because we are too dull to value them properly, or discern in what way they differ from others. A human life is a marvellous and beautiful *reality*, however little we may realize it. One may often say of a fellow creature, especially of those humble and unassuming ones who are among God's most precious saints, and some of whose goodness, perhaps, comes out after they are dead, "Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not."

"There's not a man or woman on God's earth,  
However humble, mean, or ill-appearing  
That hath not in His sight some grace and favour,

Which angels see ; but mortals overlook it,  
Being spiritually blind ; for which affliction  
They have suffered half their shames, and slain the just."  
(Robert Bridges, *The Humours of the Court*.)

Well, now, you will own, I think, that we find it hard to realize in any vivid and adequate way one another's existence, the working of one another's minds, the scope of one another's energies, the height of one another's joys, the depth of one another's sorrows. We own all this, yet we should never attempt to deny one another's existence. To do so would be to invalidate our own. Because another person does not care for me, hardly notices me, takes no interest in my tastes, feels no admiration for my powers, has no sympathy in my work, does it at all follow that these things cease to be realities ? At times, perhaps, we talk of finding it difficult to gain any conception of God. But what about our neighbour ? Have we any adequate conception of him or her, though meeting every day ?

Once more. As was said of our religion, so, too, it may be said of our regard for our neighbours. It is often tainted by the most absurd

superstition. We get ideas into our heads about some one else, utterly false beliefs, and these stand in the way of our true knowledge of and reverence for our neighbour, much as superstition does in the way of our true relations with God.

But the cure is not in agnosticism, not in indifference, not in contempt, but in greater faith and more thorough knowledge. Some foolish story has got abroad about an acquaintance. We half laugh at it, half believe it, amuse ourselves with it, though, *if* true, it is very likely no laughing matter; and this silly superstition, as one may call it, stands for half a lifetime between us and what might have been a beautiful and beneficial friendship. Some one utters a sharp flippant witticism, or gives a twisted version of a story, and we never take the trouble to see where truth ends and falsehood begins; we repeat the *bon mot* or the anecdote, and the grand noble character stands on one side and endures being pelted with our small sarcasms, and misunderstood by those whom it would fain have benefited, as some

great thinker, inventor, or discoverer, whose name posterity will bless, has been the laughing-stock of contemporaries. He or she is, perhaps, none the worse for our ridicule or contempt; but *we* are very much the worse for our lack of discernment, of reverence, and of gratitude.

Once and again how true it is that he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

If we had a little more reverence for our fellow creatures, if we felt the beauty and dignity of God's work in them, we should find it easier to reverence Almighty God. But this life is one long illustration of the way in which fine, delicate, lofty natures are misunderstood by coarse and common ones. Has your heart never ached when you saw some exquisite manifestation of human feeling bluntly checked and rejected by the person towards whom it was directed? Have you ever been with some really noble and dignified person, whom perhaps the whole of Europe and America delights in honouring, and seen how little regard and sympathy he or she gets from those who ought to

be nearest and dearest, how the poet or the artist or the musician is *only* looked upon (like Andrea del Sarto) as a bread-winner, a means to get one's selfishly incurred debts paid, and for the rest, as an absurd and fanciful dreamer?

Tradition has always represented the greatest poet of Greece, if not of the world, as wandering about in the guise of a blind beggar—

“Seven Grecian cities strove for Homer dead,  
Through which the living Homer begged his bread.”

It seems that even in those days the mass of mankind were dull and ignorant and lacking in reverence. Just fancy that blind old figure as he is said to have looked to the outward eye, and then think of what he really was, of what he really is, of what he will be long after his readers and critics are alike forgotten. Contrast the appearance with the reality, and you will have a very good idea of the shallow, petty, pitiable ignorance and stupidity of irreverence (such as he himself depicts among the suitors in the *Odyssey*), and the truth, the insight, the foresight, the dignity, the beauty of reverence. We cannot reverence grandeur without having

some grandeur in ourselves. To see the glory of Homer in so humble a disguise, the mind must itself have something Homeric in its composition.

To feel a reverence for something that comes to us recommended by no worldly display, that does not force itself upon our senses, is to have something akin to divinity in our own hearts. Jacob, with all his failings, must have had a spiritual side to his nature, or he would never have seen the angels of God ascending and descending.

How are we to obtain this spiritual insight? I do not think any of us are wholly without it, but it is no doubt easier to some than to others. I really believe *any* kind of thoroughness will help us to it. Thoroughness gives insight—a careless child throws a flower down and tramples on it—a botanist feels, because of his thorough knowledge, a kind of reverence for it. No one reverences a beautiful work of nature like a naturalist, a beautiful work of art like an artist, and no one reverences goodness like a good man.

Reverence, like true knowledge, always has a mysterious sense of something beyond and above itself ; irreverence either thinks it knows everything, or does not care to learn.

If we cultivate this habit of teachableness, of thoroughness, it seems as if we could not be far from the kingdom of God. He who reverences God's works will usually find himself reverencing God *in* His works, and ascend thence to reverence God in Himself. Sometimes, as in the case of Charles Darwin, only the first steps of the process are reached in this life ; but the reverent temper of mind which Darwin had, only needed to be carried further and expanded wider to give him in this life that nearness to God which we cannot doubt he has found in another. Then, too, if we are in earnest in our studies, not from vanity or ambition, but from real love of our subject, why should we not be equally thorough, equally in earnest in caring for and observing our fellow creatures? And if we learn to reverence them, to estimate their worth as we ought, we are on the right road to learn to reverence God, as the Creator of all

natural beauty, the Giver of all gifts of intellect and taste and skill, and above all, the Source of all the holiness and goodness of the saints.

This life will be no longer a place of weariness to us. The vision will come to us through Christ : we shall see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man, and when after such heavenly converse we once more turn our eyes to earth—a freshness as of dawn will seem to rest upon it, and we shall exclaim with Jacob—"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!"



## V.

### THY KINGDOM COME.

Read Psalm lxxii.

THE first thought that strikes us in this petition of the Lord's Prayer is that God is presented to us in a new aspect, not as a Father, but as a King. The idea of the family has enlarged itself into the idea of the kingdom. This may be compared with the Second Table of the Decalogue, where we see the same kind of development from the simplest relation of life in the fifth commandment to those—like, *e.g.* the eighth and ninth, which are addressed to us as owners of property and members of some kind of state with a tribunal for witness, however rudely constituted.

Human life in its varied aspects teaches us as in a parable, different things about God.

To-night we are to think of Him as a King ; since a kingdom presupposes some one to rule over it. Let us begin, then, by trying to define what we mean by a king. A king is a kind of father, a father is a kind of king ; but with a difference. We might say the essential difference was that we put ourselves, more or less voluntarily, under the rule of a king, while we cannot *help* being the children of our father.

We find ourselves in our father's arms when utterly helpless infants. Perhaps it may be said, "So you find yourself in a king's kingdom whether you like it or not." But there must have been a time in the history of the nation, if not of the individual, when it *chose* one person rather than another to be king, and moreover laid down for itself the rules by which succession was to be determined. England and France, for instance, have a different law of succession ; one admitting, the other excluding women. In early times monarchy was by no means always hereditary. The strong man of the family was often made king, to the exclusion

of weaker members. In Homer Odysseus is King of Ithaca when his father, Laertes, is still alive. Just so, in English history, we all know that King Alfred was elected king, although his elder brother Ethelred had left two infant sons. Strictly hereditary monarchy is only possible in well-ordered times. In more troublous days, such a spectacle as this century has seen of a girl of eighteen succeeding to the crown of England, and a new-born infant to that of Spain, would have been morally impossible.

Theoretically the king is the strongest and wisest and noblest of men. We willingly place ourselves under his sway because we trust him ; we look up to him ; we believe that he will rule justly and benevolently, and give us, his subjects, so long as we are loyal and dutiful, a secure and prosperous life. We look up to him as our example ; we try to be like him. The mere sense of his favour is a happiness to us. A word of notice from him makes us ready to go to the death in his cause ; a smile from him is a reward ; a service accepted by him is a

privilege. The dullest things in life are gilded by the sunshine of his personality. Nay, so strong is this feeling of loyalty that it is often evoked by princes who are very little worthy of it. Some of us will think of Béranger's lines about Napoleon; some of Scott's not over-drawn pictures of the enthusiasm for the exiled Stuarts; some of Montrose, hardy soldier as he was, fainting away when he heard of the death of Charles I. ; some perhaps will smile when they remember how such a monarch as Louis XIV. could make men and women happy by a salutation, a courteous phrase, a single word of approval.

The more unselfish loyalty is, the more beautiful it is. Just as a mother's love never touches us more than when bestowed on some poor, unattractive child, so it is with loyalty; because it shows us human nature's instinctive desire to look up to something higher than itself, to pour itself out in eager devotion at the feet of what it reveres, to sacrifice itself and all it values in the cause. The old Scotch-woman who sang—

“ I ance had sons, but now hae nane,  
 I bred them toiling sairly,  
 And I wad bear them all again,  
 And lose them all for Charlie,”

is a far grander creature than the royal object of her enthusiastic devotion. Such a temper of mind, with a changed direction, would have made her a Christian martyr.

The office of a king in his kingdom may be looked upon in three aspects; as constructive, as progressive, and as defensive. Every year in the history of a well-governed kingdom should see its internal organization improved, its institutions developed, its laws better, and better obeyed, the condition of its subjects advanced. But every great kingdom is also progressive in the sense of enlarging its boundaries. It has its commercial enterprises, its new colonies and settlements. It sends its sons and daughters far and wide to extend its sway. The kingdom is also defensive. It has enemies to be on its guard against. It is a militant as well as a mercantile and colonizing body. In fact, one almost implies the other.

Let us think of a kingdom, then, in the following ways ; first as a place where loyal subjects are devoted to their monarch, and love him and his rule even better than themselves, and their private interests ; next as a place of internal organization, then of outward progress, and, lastly, of defence against its enemies, and see how this seventy-second Psalm teaches us.

The reigns of David and Solomon show us how God condescended to the use of a human substitute for a Divine ideal. That the Jews should ask for a king at all when the Lord God was their King (1 Sam. viii. 7-11) had seemed like a rejection of God Himself—a walking by sight instead of by faith. And the troubled life of Saul seems indeed intended to show Israel the futility of their self-chosen ways.

Having taught them this needful lesson, God (acting as He frequently does elsewhere in Holy Scripture) proceeds to give them a king after His own heart in the person of David, whose whole life is a history of the gradual building-

up of the kingdom ; and in this seventy-second Psalm (entitled a Psalm for, or of, Solomon) we have the portrait of the ideal king of Israel, not without, we may be sure, a reference to Jesus Christ beyond. What a beautiful picture it is ! This king is above all things to rule in righteousness. Four times does the Hebrew word *sedek*, righteousness, in one form or another occur in the first seven verses of this Psalm. Three times does the word *mishpat*<sup>1</sup> (judgment, or the verb belonging to it) occur ; and once the same word for judgment (ver. 2, 1st word), which we find in Gen. xlix. 16. *Dan* shall judge his people.

The first characteristic, then, of this kingdom is righteousness, justice dealt alike to rich and poor, and, as a natural corollary from it, peace. In a word, the kingdom is to be peaceful and prosperous because its king is just. The reign of Solomon opens, as we all know, with an act of righteous judgment (1 Kings iii. 27, 28).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. En Mishpat, the well of judgment (Gen. xiv. 7) = Kadesh, because there God's judgments fell on Israel at a later date.

So the kingdom is highly organized. We find a list of the king's officers in 1 Kings iv., and of the regulations of his work for building the temple (1 Kings v.). Solomon's reign was emphatically a reign of *order*. But it was also a reign of external enlargement. The visit of the Queen of Sheba, as it is one of the most picturesque is also one of the most characteristic incidents of the reign of this king who is a type of Christ in his wisdom as well as in his glory (1 Kings x. 7, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23). His dominion shall be from the one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end (Ps. lxxii. 8).

But this ideal reign is also a reign of conquest. We see the king, as in some ancient bas-relief, receiving the submission of his conquered foes. They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before Him, His enemies shall lick the dust. David, the father of Solomon, had been a great conqueror (the peaceful reign of Solomon is founded on the victorious struggles of the previous reign) (1 Kings v. 3; 1 Chron. xxviii. 3). Hence the boundaries of Solomon's



kingdom are more extensive than that of any other Hebrew monarch (1 Kings iv. 21; 2 Chron. ix. 26). Solomon is, indeed, peaceable, as his name implies; but he looks well to his army (1 Kings iv. 24-26; ix. 19-26), and his armour (2 Chron. ix. 15, 16; xii. 9, 10). A well-ordered kingdom never forgets that its peace can only be maintained by being in a constant readiness for warfare, that peace and prosperity is to be wrung from its enemies by fortitude, bravery, and endurance. There are Philistines, Edomites, Egyptians, Syrians, and Assyrians always ready to take advantage of its weakness, and the true subjects of the kingdom must never forget that they belong to a Church militant here upon earth.

Now, it will not be very difficult for us to spiritualize all that has been said. You will notice that the Psalm has some verses at its close which could never have been applied to any earthly monarch. "Prayer shall be made ever unto (or for) Him, and daily shall He be praised. His name shall endure for ever; His name shall remain under the sun among the

posterities which shall be blessed through Him, and all the heathen shall praise Him." The figure of Solomon, magnificent as it is, melts away, and we are left in the presence of the true Son of David, the true Prince of Peace (cf. Dan. ii. 44). How, then, can we apply all that has been said to that heavenly kingdom?

We have seen that a kingdom must be well organized within, at peace and in order within itself. As to-day's Gospel<sup>1</sup> reminds us, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (Luke xi. 16, 17). It must have its set departments, its officers, its constituted authorities. So the Church of Christ is an organized society, not an indiscriminate gathering without order or subordination of parts to the whole (1 Cor. xii. 27-29).

Next, the kingdom is a progressive one. It does not stand still; it is for ever enlarging its boundaries (Isa. liv. 2-5; cf. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Rev. xxi. 25, 26). The Church of Christ must have a missionary and evangelistic character.

Thirdly, the kingdom is a militant one.

<sup>1</sup> Third Sunday in Lent.

Eph. v. 3 reminds us no evil thing has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Christ tells us Himself that He did not come to send peace, but a sword ; and this paradox is strictly true (Eph. vi. 10-12 ; 2 Tim. iv. 7 ; Rev. xix. 11, 14, 15). Peace can only be won at the sword's point in spiritual as well as in temporal affairs.

I have kept to the last the thing I spoke of first, namely, the personal loyalty and devotion to our King which all loyalty to earthly monarchs only feebly typifies. It is this that makes us, at the end of the nineteenth century, sympathize with the extravagant utterances of loyalty of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Who has not been moved by that splendid scene before the battle of Agincourt where Henry V., after over-hearing the conversation of the soldiers, bursts forth with the ejaculation—

“ Upon the king ! let us our lives, our souls,  
Our debts, our careful wives, our children, and  
Our sins, lay on the king—he must bear all ! ” etc.  
*(Henry V., act. iv. sc. 1.)*

Who has not felt that, when the poet says, in the person of Richard II.—

“Not all the water in the rough rude sea  
Can wash the balm from an anointed king ;  
The breath of worldly men cannot depose  
The deputy elected by the Lord,”

(*Richard II.*, act. iii. sc. 2.)

he is giving voice to an instinct of loyalty which looks beyond man to God ?

So with the burning utterances of Lovelace or Montrose. To some of us they may seem too high for the occasion, but they are not too high or too fervent for the Antitype, whatever they may be for the type.

Loyal Englishmen loved to remember that the proper lesson for the 30th of January which Bishop Juxon read to Charles I. but a few hours before his execution, chanced to be Matt. xxvii. We, or some at least among us, may think the language of those days about the Royal Martyr absurd and exaggerated—the question is beside the mark just now—but surely this passionate loyalty is a type of what Christians in every age ought to feel for the Royal Martyr, Who before Pontius Pilate

witnessed a good confession, the thorn-crowned King of the Jews, the King of Righteousness, the King of Peace, the King of Nations, the King of the whole world—Jesus Christ.

One word in conclusion about those two verses at the close of the Psalm, which are much more intelligible in the Bible than in the Prayer-book version. The growth and fertility of the kingdom are symbolized by two most exquisite images, the first—that of the “rain upon the mown grass” is not hard to understand, if we think of the “aftermath” which sometimes in a dry summer is better even than the first crop. But what is this “handful” (or “spreading-out”) “of corn.” We must interpret it by our Lord’s words when the Greeks—the Gentiles—were brought near to Him by St. Andrew. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” This handful or heap of corn is “lifted up”—it is high upon the hills; and then it grows so great that it resembles not a

cornfield but a forest—"its fruit shall shake like Libanus," while they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth. Both Jew and Gentile shall flourish and be blessed in the Universal kingdom of Christ, whose Name shall endure for ever.

## PART II.

### EARLY PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM.

Read Matt. xiii. 37-43.

TWO or three Sundays ago, in speaking of the words, "Our Father," I asked you to notice how, in Matt. xi. 12, 19, 27, our Lord in speaking of the kingdom of heaven, to advance which, was His work on earth, proclaimed Himself as at once Son of man and Son of God, and showed us that it was only when admitted into His kingdom that we could in the truest and highest sense call God our Father. With this thought in our minds, let us approach this group of parables "of the

kingdom" as they are called, which we find more or less in all the three Synoptical Gospels. It has been noticed that St. Matthew usually speaks of the kingdom of heaven—St. Luke, writing for Greeks, of the kingdom of God.

Before entering on the subject I should like to say, that there are a second and a third most awful group of parables of the kingdom, uttered quite at the close of our Lord's ministry (Matt. xviii.-xxv.; Luke xix.), on which we must defer entering for the present.

Roughly speaking, the parables of this our first group deal mostly with the struggles and spread of the kingdom as a Church, the second with misconceptions of the kingdom, and the third with the responsibility of individuals and Churches for the grace they have enjoyed. All that we can do to-night is to sketch, in the barest outline, the leading ideas of each of this first group of parables of the kingdom. We find our Lord in them as Son of man, in his mediatorial kingdom, that kingdom for which the whole of the Old Testament is a preparation, and which is to go on till, as St. Paul

tells us (1 Cor. xv. 24, 25), "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Our Lord's glorified Humanity, not His Godhead in which He is coequal with the Father, and His work as "Son of man" is here understood. This exactly tallies with the passage in Matt. xiii. "The Son of man"—notice—"will send His angels to gather out of *His kingdom* all things that offend; then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun *in the kingdom of their Father*." How wonderfully accurate is the wording, how wonderfully consistent the thought and statement throughout Holy Scripture!

The first parable of all—that of the Sower, does not begin with the words "The kingdom of heaven is like," but St. Luke introduces



it as a parable of the kingdom of God (viii. 1, 10; cf. Matt. xiii. 11). The kingdom of God or of heaven as reflected in these parables is the history of the visible Church of Christ upon earth—something with an external mission, an outward ministry. The Parables are parables relating to this life; to the progress of God's word in a world where the struggle of good and evil is going on (cp. Matt. v. 3, 10).

It has been well observed that the *struggles* of the kingdom are represented in the earlier parables; its progress and sufficiency in the later ones. In the parable of the Sower we see Him sowing the seed, the seed of God's word, and are shown how the natural dispositions of those who receive it, and the temptations to which they are exposed, help or hinder its growth.

In the next one, that of the wheat and tares, we are shown the enemy not only opposing the growth of goodness, but actually disseminating evil. In the Church militant—unlike the Church triumphant—good and evil are inextricably mingled together. It is not till the

harvest—the day of judgment—that they can be finally severed. We must not anticipate the decision of that day. And here St. Mark, and St. Mark only, comes in with that beautiful little parable (Mark iv. 26) of the *secret* growth of the seed of God's grace. We may have two people living side by side, baptized, confirmed, communicating together, sitting Sunday by Sunday in the same church, and in the heart of the one the good seed may be growing—rapidly though unostentatiously—and in the other, it may be lying dormant if not dead. Gentle, very gentle is the inner growth; gentle, very gentle is the way in which the tiny green shoot pushes itself up, through the clods of moistened brown earth; gentle, beautifully gentle in the development of the blade, the ear, the full corn; gentle, very gentle is the gradual ripening; and then, mark the contrast! "*Immediately* he putteth in the sickle." Who can speak of St. Mark as a mere abbreviator or copyist of St. Matthew, when he gives us such a parable as this?

Then there is the rapid growth of the

kingdom in the parable of the mustard seed, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the Lord, will hasten it in His time" (Isa. lx. 22). Then its subtle inner working in the parable of the leaven, which penetrates the whole mass with its searching vitality. The word of God is quick and powerful and penetrative, as the apostle tells us. Leaven, let us remember, is sometimes typical of a good secret influence, sometimes of a bad secret influence, in the Bible. We must return to this presently.

Then there are two parables, the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price, which teach us the enthusiasm with which the Gospel should be received, the value we should place on it, and the sacrifices we should be willing to make for it. In the first instance, stress is laid on the fact that the treasure is hidden. It is not every one who knows what the Gospel has to give them. Most people walk along the field of life, and only observe the grass that grows there, the sheep that browse there, the trees that shade it, the gate that leads out of

it. One man knows what lies hidden underneath. The thought makes him intensely happy. No sacrifice is too great to obtain that treasure. That man does not go by outward appearances. He looks deeper, looks below the surface, and he has his reward. The other parable seems rather to represent what is a very, very common experience. A man is seeking goodly pearls—earthly joys—first one, and then another. He tries what ambition, fame, pleasure, art, study, and the like can do for him. But he is still a seeker, until he finds the kingdom of God. Notice the emphasis here on the word *one*, *ἓνα πολύτιμον μαργαρίτην*. At last he finds one thing, and one only, which is far worthier than all the rest, and he sells all that he has; he loses his chance so to speak of all the other pearls, in order that he may have this one priceless jewel. St. Luke does not give us this or some of the other parables; but he gives it us in act when he tells us the history of the two sisters at Bethany, and the words “One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good

part which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 41).

Lastly, there is the solemn parable of the draw-net; how appropriate, how impressive, when we think that any day on the shores of Gennesaret the outward reality of it might have been seen, as we might see it ourselves at Whitby or any other fishing village when the nets are drawn up, the worthless fish thrown away to rot on the sand; the good ones only preserved. The good fish in the Gospels may be brought by St. Andrew to Christ Himself, may be miraculously multiplied, and lifted to a life beyond their own; they may even play a part in these mystic scenes of which St. Luke tells us (xxiv. 42), and St. John (xxi. 9-13); meanwhile the bad fish—one sees them now as one has often seen them on an English coast, no longer allowed to remain in their vital element, are gradually wasting away in sun and wind, and daily becoming more unsightly, till a mere bony skeleton is left!

So much for this first group of parables

themselves ; now, how can we work their teaching into our thoughts, our lives, our prayers?

First of all, I think, by remembering that we are not only to receive the kingdom ourselves—as the often explained Parable of the Sower teaches us—but try to impart it to others. The ears of corn not only supply grain for the garner, but for the seed plot. The seed of God's word multiplied in our hearts must be sown again by means of our lives from generation to generation.

No religious life can be complete—rather say every religious life is most imperfect—that does not care for missionary work both at home and abroad. A well-worked parish is one where you will always find a good deal is done, not only for local institutions, but also for missions to the heathen. How *can* we honestly say “Thy kingdom come,” if we don't do all that we can to spread that kingdom ourselves? When St. Columba, and St. Patrick, and St. Augustine, and St. Boniface, and other early preachers of the gospel said, “Thy

kingdom come," they did not mean, "Let *me* have a comfortable Christian life in my own home, my own city, my own monastery, but let all those Britons, and Scots, and Irish, and Germans be turned from their idolatries and brought out of their heathen darkness to know God. I want my ear of corn not only to be garnered up, but to supply some grains that other ears may grow." Our Lord Himself reminds us of this when He says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Ah, we must own that a comfortable Christianity which only thinks of saving its own soul, and goes to Church in its Sunday clothes, and listens to beautiful prayers and hymns and sermons, and eats its Sunday dinner with a self-satisfied sense of having done the proper thing, and repeats the words "Thy kingdom come," and means nothing particular by them, and grudges a few shillings a year to missionary work . . . is it not a caricature of Christianity to call such a religion by the same name as we give to the religion of the Francis

Xaviers, the Henry Martyns, the Selwyns and Pattesons and Hanningtons of the Church of Christ?

Let us not, because some missionaries are injudicious, some missionary efforts foolishly promoted, some missionary literature dull and badly written, think that exonerates us from caring for missions. If we are wise and clever enough to criticise, let us be wise and clever enough to work, to help, to promote the kingdom. Otherwise the stupidest old "Miss Toosey," who ever saved her poor pence, and said her imperfect prayers for the progress of God's kingdom, is acting up to the spirit of this petition far better than we.

But some of us may be making efforts, however feebly, for the growth of the kingdom. In that case let us not be disheartened. That is the lesson of the next parable. There is an enemy sowing tares; we must expect evil, expect disappointment. Let us not be impatient. Perhaps we do not always know which are wheat and which are tares. And in the spiritual field the tares may be changed to



wheat by faith and love and prayer. Even the scholar or child, who disappoints us most, may be capable of better things. At any rate, do not in your judgments anticipate the Day of Harvest.

Time is short ; but I should specially like to say a word about the parable of the leaven. It is not without meaning, we may be sure, that the leaven, which typifies spiritual influence, is placed in a woman's hands. This may well be interpreted of the Church ; but is it not true of all women ? What is so searching as a woman's influence ? The babe feels it as she speaks softly to it while it lies upon her knee ; the child feels it as she draws it to her side in its little troubles, or bends over its pillow at night. The great rough schoolboy feels it in the presence of his mother, the sick person feels it as his nurse mingles tenderness for the body with gently spoken comfort for the soul. The pupil recognizes it in the teacher ; every fireside, every social reunion, every drawing-room, every country house is part of the mass where that searching leaven

of woman's influence spreads—for evil or for good—who shall say? Read the life of a woman like Catharine Tait or Madame Swetchine, and see how it works for good; read some other lives which I need hardly name, and see how it works for evil. And it is not only personal influence. In these days half the popular fiction and light, often anonymous, literature of the day is from the pens of women. Can we feel all this, and not pray that our own little share of personal influence (and those have it most who pride themselves least upon it) should not be like the leaven of malice and wickedness, but like the leaven of this beautiful parable working towards the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Then, too, the grain of mustard seed. A little thing, but with such miraculous power of growth. Let us think of this when we have two or three children to teach in a country Sunday school, a few dull poor people to read or talk to in a workhouse infirmary, and one or two humble duties which we may perform. Let us think, too, of the small beginnings of

good in our own characters, and ask for grace not to be disheartened.

I need not say much about the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. May we all be enabled to feel the true joy which the discovery of that hidden treasure brings! May we all feel that the many objects of earthly desire and ambition, for which lives and souls are risked as divers risk theirs in the deep ocean when they seek for pearls, are as nothing in comparison of that one thing needful, that priceless thing—the Kingdom of Heaven!

In our Burial Service we pray that God will shortly accomplish the number of His elect and hasten His kingdom. In this last parable, the parable of the draw-net, we see that prayer in the act of being answered. The time of probation is over, the day of severance has come. What an awful picture! The good fish are good, the evil fish are evil; we seem to hear the words, "He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." One dare not go beyond the words of Holy Scripture as to the state of the lost—the

rejected. But note this, that whereas in actual reality the good fish die when brought to land, it is not so with the soul. Henceforth thou shalt be catching men alive (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἀνθρώπους ἔση ζωγρῶν, Luke v. 10) were our Lord's very remarkable words to St. Peter at the first miraculous draught. We must die that we may live for ever. It is just worth noticing, too, that in John xxi. 11, the history of the second miraculous draught, they are said to be great fishes. One hundred and fifty-three, "the number of the elect," is not, of course, to be taken literally, but it means that every individual is precious to God. When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we pray, then, in addition to those prayers already suggested, that the work of the visible Church on earth may be so blessed and prospered that her days of trial "for the elect's sake" may be shortened, that the net of the Gospel may be filled, and that all those who have welcomed, and promoted, and loved, and served the kingdom of Christ upon earth, may be brought safe to land, to that eternal life which here they can only dimly

apprehend, the conditions of existence in which are quite unintelligible to them now, but which, just because they are unintelligible and inexpressible, are full of the promise of infinite and inexhaustible delight and glory.

### PART III.

#### LATER PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM.

Read Matt. xxv., or one of the other parables referred to below.

WHEN we come to consider the "parables of the kingdom" which belong to the close of our Lord's ministry, we shall find that they are separable into two parts; the first those which occur in the interval between the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii.) and our Lord's prophecy against the Temple (Matt. xxiv.) on the very eve of His Passion, and the second a group of three parables, to which we must refer presently, in Matt. xxv. We may notice that our Lord's words to St. Peter (Matt. xvi. 19), "I will give unto thee the keys of the *kingdom of heaven*,"

are immediately followed by a prophecy of His suffering (v. 21), by the rebuke of Peter ; by the Transfiguration ; by another prophecy of the Passion (xvii. 22), and by our Lord's assertion of His own kingship over nature (27), when the stater is found by Peter in the fish's mouth.

All this while we see the disciples are quite mistaken as to the nature of the kingdom. They think it is to be a means of gratifying ambition. They ask who is to be the greatest (xviii. 1), and our Lord calls a little child unto Him, and says, so far from being the greatest, they will not even *enter* into that kingdom without humility (cf. xix. 14). They seem to need to be taught the very elements of the doctrine of the kingdom. We shall see therefore that the first of these two groups of parables is to a great extent devoted to removing *misconceptions* as to the nature of the kingdom. Peter asks how often he is to forgive his brother, and a parable is narrated (xviii. 23), "The *kingdom of heaven* is likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants." The kingdom of heaven is not only

a place where we must be humble as a child, but forgiving, as our Father forgives us. The idea of worldly aggrandizement is further attacked in the next chapter, "a rich man can hardly enter the kingdom" (xix. 23). "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first" (30). This is illustrated by the "parable of the denarius" (xx. 1), in which the labourers in the vineyard are taught that the master will give to the last no less than the first. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Our own merits can never fit us for God's gifts.

Once more our Lord speaks solemnly to the twelve of His approaching end (xx. 18); once more their utter want of comprehension is shown by the mother of Zebedee's children asking aggrandizement for her two sons "in Thy kingdom." O how weary our Lord must have been of these endless displays of ambition and self-love!

But it was not only in the case of His own disciples, but in that of the high priests and the elders that He had to correct misconceptions of the very gravest kind concerning the

kingdom. The Jewish high priests and Pharisees had forgotten the warnings in that great vineyard parable (Isa. v. 3, 4). They had sunk back into a state of self-satisfaction in the midst of decadence. "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you," are His stern words at the close of the parable which contrasts the professions of the first son asked to work in his father's vineyard with the performance of the second (xxi. 28). There are no less than three parables about vineyards in this portion of St. Matthew's Gospel. It was, we know, spring-time, and vineyard operations going on. We see the gardeners cutting off the redundant fresh young green shoots of vines in our own conservatories. Can we not think of what must have been going on in Palestine when our Lord spoke the fifteenth chapter of St. John (I am the true Vine) and these three parables, *i.e.* the denarius, the two sons, and (Matt. xxi. 33) the parable of the householder, the servants, the husbandmen, and the heir? The vineyard, "the kingdom of God," is to be taken from the chief priests and Pharisees, who



are about to slay the true Heir, Jesus Christ, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. The kingdom of heaven, then, is not to be ours by mere prescriptive right, by mere outward religious professions. Our Lord looks for fruit, as He did at this very time on the barren fig-tree (xxi. 19), and as He did on the Jewish Church of which it was so vivid and awful a type.

But it is not enough for us to accept the kingdom of heaven ; we must accept also the terms on which it is offered to us. The parable of the marriage feast shows us the liberal, the universal generosity with which it is offered to mankind ; but it also shows that we can only come in when arrayed in the wedding garment—the robe of righteousness made white for us by the blood of Christ. Our own merits will never fit us for admission into that kingdom. And once more our Lord repeats those solemn words with which He had concluded the parable of the denarius, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (xxii. 14 ; cf. Mark. xi. 31).

So far we see that this group of parables, I

will recapitulate them once more—"The unmerciful fellow-servant;" "The 'penny a day';" "The two sons—profession and performance;" "The householder and the unjust husbandmen;" "The wedding-feast and garment;"—all these parables are aimed to a great extent at correcting misapprehensions concerning the kingdom. We see it is not a place or a state for the gratification of the self-love and worldly ambition of the apostles, or of the false and mistaken conservatism and spiritual pride of the Jewish hierarchy, nor is it a place to which our own works and merits will ever entitle us (see the denarius and the wedding garment), nor will the inheritance of long-descended privileges and traditions fit us for enjoying it. Nothing but obedience, nothing but faith, nothing but the merits and mercy of Christ as applied to us in His appointed means of grace, will fit us for that kingdom.

But now we come to the three concluding parables of our Lord, spoken apparently on the evening of that same Tuesday in Holy Week on which He spoke the three last parables

already mentioned. Meanwhile, He has uttered His parting cry over Jerusalem, "Your house is left unto you desolate," and has pronounced that awful prophecy of the destruction of the city, and of the end of the world, which we find in Matt. xxiv. The day is waning; the hours are hurrying rapidly onwards towards the crucifixion—the lips that are speaking these words will soon be parched in the agonizing thirst of death, the countenance, every look of which is full of impressive significance and yet inexplicable meaning, will soon be marred by the crown of thorns—if ever the words of Christ are momentous, are earnest, are sacred, it must be surely now. What, then, are *these* parables of the kingdom of heaven? (Matt. xxv.) The ten virgins. The talents. The sheep and the goats.

I think it may be said that just as the parables already mentioned were warnings to us as members of the Church as a whole, so these parables have a special message for *individual* souls. Our Lord has been speaking of His second coming, of its suddenness, of the faithful

and unfaithful servant. And we know that in that second coming, every individual will have to give account for his graces, his gifts, and his opportunities.

The ten virgins can all, if they will, obtain oil to feed their lamps—that “blessed unction from above” which throughout the Bible is typified by oil—the gift of the Holy Spirit. The means of grace must be resorted to, if our spiritual lamps are to go on burning.

The talents seem rather to represent our natural powers and abilities, and the responsibilities which they bring. This idea is so well understood that a few words will suffice to suggest it now. Compare the parable of the pounds spoken as our Lord was for the last time approaching Jerusalem (Luke xxii. 11), which is instructive both as to the points in which it resembles, and those in which it differs, from the parable of the talents.

Then comes the awful concluding parable of the sheep and the goats, the last parable spoken by our Redeemer, Who will come to be our Judge; is it not a tremendous lesson—a lesson

that makes us hold our breath as we listen to the words, on the use of opportunities? The sins are not sins of a positive, but of a negative kind—as in the case of the rich man and Lazarus. It is not that the souls on the left hand have been guilty of blasphemy, murder, theft, drunkenness. Oh no! It is not what they have done, but what they have *not done* that causes the bitterness of this supreme moment.

If we would enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, these three last parables seem to say we must have oil in our lamps; we must implore God's grace, we must avail ourselves of the means of grace; we must make a right use of our talents, be they great or be they small, in God's service, and we must not waste our opportunities. While we have time let us do good unto all men.

Now, how can we turn all these thoughts into prayers, when we say, "Thy kingdom come"? First let us go back on the first of these two groups of parables, and pray that God will give us that childlike spirit, that

loving, obedient, and forgiving spirit, that unworldliness which He Himself has taught us is a necessary condition of our entering the kingdom. Then let us look on His kingdom as His Church, His vineyard. Let us pray that His kingdom may come in and by His Church. Let us pray for our own dear Church of England, at home, and in India and our numerous colonies, that she may never rest content, as the Pharisees did, with her old memories, her old traditions, however glorious, that she may never be slothful and self-satisfied, but may go on bringing forth more and more fruit in her age. Then surely we ought to pray for the great continental Churches of Europe—the Roman Church, the Greek Church, ay, and the Lutheran and other Protestant Churches—that what is good may be preserved, what is dormant revived, what is corrupt purged away. Only just think what the Greek Church might do for Russia, for instance, or the Roman Church for France and Italy and Spain, and the Lutheran Church for Germany, if each were more conformed to the pattern set by Christ.

And when we think and speak of England, can we leave America out of our prayers? America, which but for the shortcomings of our eighteenth century legislature, might have escaped the great Wesleyan schism?

Then ought we not to pray for the Jews—the elder son of one parable, the rebellious husbandmen of another, the ungrateful guests of a third? We cannot ignore the Jews, we cannot despise them, there is a nobility in their very ruins—"If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead" (Rom. xi. 15)?

But now about these three last parables, the parables of individual responsibility. Here we ought to pray that God's kingdom may come in *our own hearts*. "The Kingdom of God is within you," He says Himself.

There are no more awful words in the whole Bible than St. Paul's, "Lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

How, then, is it with our own souls? Does

God reign there? Are we seeking His kingdom and His righteousness before everything else? Do we pray for His Holy Spirit? Do we really *value* the means of grace? Are we getting oil in our lamps? Are we looking on Church going, Bible reading, and so forth, as a duty to be "got through," or as a privilege to be prized? If God's kingdom comes in our hearts it will mean that we are not slavishly obedient, but lovingly and joyfully dutiful in these matters. Then should not we ask for God's grace to use our *talents* so as to advance His kingdom? Some of us think, perhaps, we are clever, or others have told us so; or, perhaps, popular or influential. Now, my dear friends, every time you get a glimmer of an idea of this kind, do let it be not a cause for vanity, but a real and very solemn reminder of the great day of account. One of the great delights of being young to some happy and gifted people is the finding out by the mind of its own powers; and then comes the question, How am I going to use those powers? Selfishly, or unselfishly? For God's glory, or for my



own? Some may perhaps say, on the other hand, "I can do so little to glorify God." Ah, how *do* you know? How *can* you tell? Are not our metaphorical talents just like literal money? Some people's shillings go further than others' five-pound notes. I am thinking now of a dear, dear old servant we know who is lying very ill. There won't be any newspaper paragraphs about her when she dies, her life has not been a showy one, she is not a sham lady, but a real servant, and, therefore, as good as the best of ladies. I can only say that the memory of such a character, making no display in its grand, pathetic unselfishness and its deep, simple, loving-kindness, is a thing that those who knew it, and owed very likely their own lives on many occasions to its affectionate care, is a treasure far, far higher and more precious than the distinguished society of this world can give. Though, indeed, a loving heart such as hers is not one talent, but five. And those of us who have loving hearts have no cause to complain, even if we come short of the intellectual gifts of many others. The very

power of enjoying *others'* talents *is* a talent, and a very great one. But when we are called upon to part with those we love, we feel in full force the teaching of this last great parable, the parable of the sheep and goats, about *opportunities*. So far as the man or woman whose body has just been laid in the grave is concerned, the irrevocable doom has been pronounced. Our opportunity has been sealed down for ever with that coffin lid. There are some opportunities still left us with regard to other lives, but never, never again can we be kind to him or her. The affectionate word that once died unuttered on our tongues can never reach those deaf ears now. . . . I cannot trust myself to say more ; I should not say thus much, only when we pray "Thy kingdom come," do let us pray that it may so come in our hearts that when our King—for He it is, and none other—comes to us in the disguise of poverty, sickness, sorrow, dulness, old age, misfortune, or loneliness, we may recognize His royalty beneath all these disguises, and so use our remaining opportunities, getting,

alas! daily and yearly fewer and fewer, that when the Son of man comes in the glory of His Father with His holy angels, we may hear from His blessed lips, "Ye did it unto Me." We have prayed that God's kingdom may come on earth "as it is in heaven" (for such seems the right interpretation of all these three first petitions); may we not, therefore, conclude by praying that the kingdom of Christ on earth may be so advanced, that the time may be hastened, when—the work of His Mediatorial kingdom being completed—He may say to us, "Come, ye blessed children of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"?

## VI.

### THY WILL BE DONE.

#### PART I.

Read John vi. 38-40.

PERHAPS it may have struck some of us in thinking about the Lord's Prayer, that the sentences are turned in a different way—a more impersonal way—than we should have turned them. *We* should, perhaps, have said (as our own explanation of the Lord's Prayer does in the catechism), I desire my Lord God to send His grace unto me and to all people, that *we* may worship Him, serve Him, and obey Him as we ought to do. But in the Lord's Prayer itself it is not *we* that are the nominative case, but God's name, His kingdom, His will. These three great abstractions seem to acquire a kind of personality of their own ; we are, as it were,

swallowed up in them. God's kingdom seems like a majestic organization to which all individual lives are subordinated ; God's will a great purpose which has to go on accomplishing itself whatever may happen. The Greek word "Thy will be done," *γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου*, would be better translated perhaps by "take place" or "come to pass," than by "be done ;" it is not from a verb "to do," but from a verb "to become." *Fiat voluntas tua*. It is well for us to bear this in mind, for there are two popular misconceptions about God's will, one that it is only something to be *done*, and another, perhaps, at least, as common, that it is only something to be *suffered*. Both these ideas are true, so far as they go, but God's will is something greater than either. God's will is the purpose in the Divine mind, some portion of which is revealed to us men. A great deal of God's will goes on accomplishing itself independently of us—the movements of the starry heavens, the course of the seasons, the progress of all the vegetable and animal life we see around us, and for aught we know

much beside in the great universe. When *we* say, "Thy will be done," or come to pass, we no doubt indirectly and thankfully assent to all that God is doing in the natural world, we acknowledge Him as the Lord, Creator, and Sustainer of it all, but our special prayer is for humanity, for that one portion of God's creation which *can* disobey Him, which *can* resist and oppose His will, because He has been pleased to endue it with freewill.

Now let us ask ourselves why it is that our will ever runs contrary to the will of God? Put very shortly, it comes to this, We make self the centre of the universe instead of God.

The strong selfish character sets out in life with its own ambitions and ideas of self-aggrandizement, its daydreams of success, its visions of power and influence, perhaps disguised under the show of God's service; but it does not say to itself, "How can I do God's will?" Perhaps it says, "How can I develop or realize myself?" This is a very popular modern ideal, but a most inadequate and mistaken one when taken to represent *the* aim

which ought to be ours in life. Perhaps it looks on the will of God only with reference to self ; it thinks that "God," or perhaps, as Napoleon did, it says "destiny" is watching over it with special favour. It sees its own image (like that of Augustus Cæsar in some coins) with a star over the forehead. It does not look on the Will of God as a very great thing, and on self as a very little thing ; on the contrary, it thinks that the Will of God is, or ought to be, chiefly set in motion to promote the well-being of one or two favoured individuals. Consequently it is always making blunders, being disappointed with the course of events, and coming into collision with things as they really are, and like the flat-iron in Hans Andersen's story, which fancied itself a railway-engine, is very apt to take a most mistaken view of what is expected from, or due to, itself. Sometimes it neglects very obvious and humble duties in order to do what it thinks loftier ones ; sometimes it turns a deaf ear to the needs of others because it is preoccupied with self ; very often it takes "my duty," or even "my vocation," as

a convertible term for "God's will," forgetting to place what it considers its duty in such a light as that it may be seen in its proper place relatively to other people's duties and vocations. Sometimes it does not even make any pretence whatever of doing God's will, but simply carries out its own schemes ; and as time goes on, gets less and less scrupulous in its methods, till it finds itself at last in direct opposition to the will of God.

One natural consequence of such a course as this, is overweening self-satisfaction at one time of life, contrasted with the entire breakdown of self-respect at another ; whereas he who places the Will of God before everything else, never despairs, but only submits to and thankfully accepts God's will. This was the spirit of St. Paul when he was willing that God should be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or by death.

Now since the creation of the world there has been but one Being on this earth Who ever knew the whole will of God, His will not only as regards this planet, but as regards the whole



universe—and that Being was Jesus Christ. What was the *effect* on Him of a knowledge of God's will?

The great men of this world have generally arrived at the conclusion that God's will meant a high place in the world for themselves. The benefits they have conferred on society have usually been rewarded by some very substantial recognitions. Exactly the opposite of this was the case with Jesus Christ. What does He tell us Himself? "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." What was that will? Complete self-sacrifice. We have it in Ps. xl. 7, 8. Self-sacrifice, not for its own sake, but for the good of mankind. Cf. John vii. 39.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification," says St. Paul (1 Thess. iv. 3). Our Lord's view of the universe is as penetrative as it is complete. He stands on a mountain-top, from whence He can see, not only the kingdoms of the world and all their glory (and mean must those kingdoms be, and despicable that glory to One Who sees as He does), but He sees

far more than that. He sees the universe of souls which God has entrusted to Him. "And this is the Father's will that hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." A complete conception of the Will of God, then a complete readiness to accept it, is the very antipodes of self-seeking.

It follows, then, that in order to be like our Lord, the first thing we must do is to try and gain an adequate conception of God's will. Many people go wrong, not so much from wilful disobedience as from lack of knowledge. Here it is that such a prayer as to-day's collect<sup>1</sup> comes to our aid. We begin by praying for God's holy inspiration to think those things that be good, in other words, for grace to take a sufficiently enlarged and comprehensive view of our own duties and of their relation to God's will for all mankind ; and it is very necessary we should, for it is here that the mistake comes in in many of our lives—a mistake not unlike that of those old economists who advocated

<sup>1</sup> Fifth Sunday after Easter.

protection—the mistake of thinking that the interest of a part could be advantageously consulted before that of the whole.

We, for instance, all want to do what we *like* doing, instead of what *needs* doing. Generally speaking, what *needs* doing is something very few people like. We see it among working people, where boys and girls who have been at school prefer what they consider genteel employments to what they call menial work ; and we perhaps blame them while we are doing something very like it ourselves. And here two opposite dangers present themselves, there is the danger of neglecting, and also of doing exclusively, “the duty that lies nearest.”

“Do the duty that lies nearest,” is a most attractive formula, it sounds so simple ; and very often it is excellent advice to follow. But like many other simple portable formulæ, it may often mislead us. Royal roads and short cuts frequently do. One may go on doing the duty that lies nearest till one forgets the duties that lie further off. It is so easy to get into a groove and never look beyond it ! One may become

like the Lady of Shalott, never raising her eyes from her magic web. St. Paul has reminded us what a very *progressive* thing our knowledge and fulfilment of God's will ought to be (Col. i. 9-11). If I may say so, I think it would be a very good plan if we on our birthdays, or New Year's Day, or in Holy Week, or at some fixed time took stock of our lives *as a whole*, and asked ourselves—given our characters, our circumstances, our advantages of various kinds—whether we really were filling that place in the world which God expected us to fill, or were trifling away our lives; whether we were not only doing that well-worn “duty that lies nearest” fairly well, but were as alive as we ought to be to duties which it cost us a little effort to reach. There is a very striking expression of Bishop Taylor's, where he prays, “that I may do works proportionable to my person, and to the dignity of a Christian,” which is too apt to be forgotten in the present day.

What a wholesome shock it gives us sometimes to feel how much more a friend with no greater advantages than our own manages to do

with his or her life. He is more sympathetic, more generous, far more alive to what is going on outside, less shut up in his own shell, does twenty kindnesses for our one, finds more time for religious duties, and perhaps has quietly started some great and lasting work which seems to have grown almost out of nothing, while we have been hammering on in the old conventional lines. I do not speak of people with exceptional "vocations"—these belong to a class by themselves—but of the men and women we meet and brush up against every day.

What is the secret of such a person's character? Surely likeness to Christ in these four respects, a large view of life, a large view of God's will, thoroughness in carrying it out to the minutest detail, and a readiness to put self entirely on one side.

Some of the best work in the world has been ruined by too narrow a conception of God's will. How often has it been, for instance, the blot on an otherwise fine character that the man or woman cannot see when *another* person's share

is to come in doing a great work! How few can stand aside, efface themselves, and not interfere! Thus, in smaller matters, how often in a sick-room a patient's peace and comfort is spoilt because some friend or relative insists on thrusting herself in and helping, or rather hindering, those who are engaged there. How often the mere desire for notice makes us all in different ways overdo what is being well done already, and neglect something in which we really might be useful! I once heard a friend's character described as "glorified common sense," and it is just the open-mindedness and fairness and readiness to observe, which a true lover of the will of God attains to, which produces and fosters the best kind of common sense. Another fruit of that love of the will of God is the understanding sympathy which makes us care for work in which we can have no personal share. For instance, we may not think it very high praise, but it is high praise, especially in a woman, to be a good listener. Perhaps we women, in the reactionary spirit of the moment, are a little in danger of forgetting that the Queen of Beauty, when she

sat apparently passive at the tournament, was *really* influencing the knights in the arena, that the thought of the women of Troy in their sweeping robes was a real stimulus to heroic valour, and that many heroes of lesser fame have had the thought of their quiet fireside and some woman's face beside it as she listened to some tale of adventure or plan of beneficence stirring them to some of the greatest deeds of history.

It is often the wife or mother or sister who is a good listener and good sympathizer who has, under God, been the real strength of a man's life, who has stood encouragingly at his side at some crisis when he all but gave up in despair the work which God had sent him into the world to do, who said the hopeful word or gave the sympathetic touch which saved him from failure and supported him under disappointment. Do not let us despise these humble offices. We are members one of another. You cannot separate the mother from the son, the daughter from the father, the wife from the husband, or the sister from the brother ; a man is not half a

man without a woman's sympathy : a woman is not half a woman unless she be ready to bestow it.

One is apt to think of the will of God under various similitudes. Perhaps you will let me mention one which very frequently occurs to my own mind.

You pick up from the ground a little tiny feather wafted by the wind from the breast of some bird, perhaps the soft pinkish grey of a dove, the rich black, purple, and gold of a pheasant, or the indescribable blue-green of a peacock. You examine it, and exclaim at its perfect loveliness and exquisite finish, a loveliness and perfection which the microscope enhances, and then you think how wonderfully it is fitted to its place—soft and smooth and light, so as to offer the least possible resistance to the air when the bird is flying, beautifully warm, and as to shape and colour, part of the exquisite modulation of tint to which no artist can do justice. Then you think of the great strong wing-feathers ; how unlike they are to the breast feathers, but how well fitted to do *their* part in



the flight of the bird, and you go on to think of the bird itself and how admirably it is fitted for its share in universal life, and you feel you have had a parable of two ways in which we must try to realize the will of God, the way of individual perfection, and the way of co-operation with others. Let us try to keep these two aspects of God's will before us, let us pray for His merciful guiding to perform the same, and we, too, shall take our rightful place in His plan and purpose, and we shall rise from the broken dusty fragments of this earthly life with the air of heaven bearing us upwards and onwards.

"Though ye have lien among the pots,<sup>1</sup> yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold."

I hope next time to say something of the will of God from the point of view of suffering.

<sup>1</sup> This rendering, though perhaps not a very accurate one, has so much beauty of its own, and has been consecrated by such long usage, that I venture to retain it.

## PART II.

Read Luke xxii. 40-44.

"THY will be done in earth as it is in heaven." We so often use the words, "Thy will be done," as an expression of resignation, that we perhaps forget that it was not till the close of our Lord's earthly life that that special signification was impressed upon them. There is a real analogy between the Life of Christ upon earth and that of many Christian men and women; much of it was carrying out God's will in a way that in itself was productive of happiness. To say nothing of the healthy development through His childhood and youth to perfect manhood in a country where nature herself was healthy and beautiful, all of which was part of the will of God, must there not have been something, like what in our lesser degree many of us feel to-day, in being allowed to carry out God's beneficent purposes for others? How many men and women there are now to whom doing

God's will is a real enjoyment! "I love my profession," said a great benefactor of mankind, the late Sir Andrew Clarke, when some one pitied him for coming to the end of his holiday vacation.<sup>1</sup> And to all who in any way resemble him—the physician who has the delight of being able to relieve pain or restore power, the nurse who wins a grateful look from some sufferer, the rich man who has started a lad in business, at the moment when he learns of his success and usefulness, the author who gets by post some grateful words from an unknown reader, the parish priest who finds something he has said or done has really helped and benefited his flock—all these and such as these have something of the Christlike joy of doing God's will, and at the same time using faculties which they *enjoy* using. What a pleasure for a great singer like Madame Goldschmidt to go down and sing to those patients in the Brompton Hospital! What a pleasure for any one to find he or she has any faculty which can cheer or help or benefit others! Think then

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Gladstone's speech, May 3, 1894, at Princes' Hall.

what, in one aspect (even when all obvious deductions are made), the Life of our Lord must have been! Could any one have restored the widow's son at Nain without a thrill of personal happiness? Could any one have fed those five thousand in the wilderness without some sense of the joy of relieving so many weary souls?

So, when we think, as this petition teaches us to do, of the blessed angels, we find ourselves exclaiming how *happy* they must be in doing God's will! First of all, we may suppose, they are perfectly clear as to what God's will for them consists in (Ps. ciii. 20). We often talk of having to choose between conflicting duties. If we were as good as the angels, I suspect we should become much clearer sighted than we are. We should not be drawn two ways as Lot was, and stop at Zoar—that miserable place of compromise—but we should go straight on, as the angel would have had him do (Gen. xix. 17).

Then, too, there would be absolute readiness to do God's will. Our wills would fall exactly

into line with God's will. When we see angels represented as they often are with musical instruments, we feel at once it is a kind of allegory. Even the least musical among us know that in music the very pleasure consists in the *rightness* of what we do. In music a false note is a thing of pain, a true note a thing of delight. Music, more than anything else in this world, is intolerant of disobedience, of short-coming, of excess. Some music may be more beautiful than others, but all must be *right*. A false note is a sin, an injury, and a sin which no one would willingly be guilty of. In music the *desire* is always to do right, and the happiness is only in doing right. No wonder, therefore, that music has become typical for us of the angelic life, of a life which is not only melodious but harmonious, not only right in itself, but capable of the most exquisite combination with the beauty and rightness of other lives.

Here is another touch of the angelic life. It does not know what envy and self-seeking is. Its own goodness is incomplete unless joined on to that of others.

Perhaps some of us may have envied the angels, may have wished our perceptions of God's will were as clear, our happiness in doing it as complete, our concord with others as perfect as is the case with them. Thoughts like these come into our minds, and then we find ourselves suddenly confronted with a very different picture, as we pass from the Gloria in Excelsis at Bethlehem to the moonlit Garden of Gethsemane. There, too, God's will has to be accomplished, but how? along a path which is beset with briars and thorns, and where—as often is the case now with God's saints—the voices of dear friends and companions have been saying, “Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not happen unto Thee.” And what could be further from *happiness* than that terrible agony when the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak, that time of shrinking, of inexpressible horror, and all but despair, which the Evangelists tell us, then brooded over the human Soul of Christ.

The angels do God's will in perfect love and harmonious fellowship one with another, but

where was the fellowship in the case of Christ? "I have trodden the wine-press *alone*"—what a pathos in those words! "They *all* forsook Him and fled." Truly that angel, who we read was sent to Him from heaven strengthening Him, must have felt that there were mysteries here in which the angelic nature had no part (cf. Eph. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12). The agony in the garden is like a series of discords, of struggles, of stormy buffetings, and torturing emotions—and just as discords in music are resolved when the final chord with its great spreading vibrations of rest and peace is struck—so the "It is finished" on the Cross seems to leave a thrill of satisfied content that dies away into blissful quiet on the listener's heart.

There are times, then, when to do God's will seems to cost us very little but that labour which is in itself a delight. But as we develop we begin to learn that it is not the delight which sometimes accompanies doing God's will, but the Will itself which we must make our object.

Very often there is so much enjoyment mingled with our work for God that we flatter

ourselves we are seeking His will when we are really seeking our own pleasure ; but the first time of trouble that comes to us soon tests and tries us, whether our life has been self-seeking or God-seeking. In the eighty-fourth Psalm we have a beautiful illustration of this (see Revised Version). The man in whose heart are the highways to Zion, comes sooner or later to a vale of Baca—a vale of weeping.<sup>1</sup> The road of life dips down into a sunless valley. Cf. Ps. cx. 7. At the bottom of it, marking the lowest depth of the descent, there runs a stream. Notice how, just before the agony, our Lord crosses—as David did, over the brook Kidron—the *black* river—black because it was at the bottom of a narrow gorge, and because of the deep shadows of the ravine, thickly crowned with trees, and fed by mountain rains and snows (cf. Job vi. 15, 16). We use the expression, “a vale of tears,” so habitually that we

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxiv. 6, “O the blessings of the man, strength to him in Thee ; the highways are in the hearts of those passing through the valley of [the] Baca ; as a spring they will set it ; moreover the [former] rain will cover over the pools,” or “covereth it with blessings,” a beautiful and true image.



have almost lost the pathos and poetry and deep symbolism which it once possessed ; but any lover of mountain scenery can easily feel the beauty of the image. Yet even this dark water, this water of tears is full of refreshment. It is the brook in *the way*—part of our pilgrim's progress, the way appointed us by God. The same will of God, the same pathway which led us once over sunny slopes, green fields, tempting woods, full of the song of birds and carpeted with wild-flowers, now leads us hither. Often we come to it quite suddenly, almost before we are aware, just as in a mountain walk a precipitous descent sometimes reveals itself when least expected. Now you know quite well when you are on a journey, the path is the one thing you must cling to at whatever cost ; the path is the path, and you go on it not because it is pleasant, but because it takes you where you ought to go. Just so the will of God is the will of God—one must cling to it at whatever cost, and find one's happiness in it—not in the fact that it brings us into contact with pleasure or self-satisfaction.

Here some of us, perhaps, are saying to ourselves, How commonplace, even childish, all this is! But, as you know, there are times in life when a vivid light seems suddenly to flash on a truism just as a sunbeam does on a wayside stone, and makes it almost a new thing. This is never more observable than in the case of illness, and many of us may have felt it with regard to our sick and suffering friends. I am thinking of an instance within my own knowledge where it seemed hardly possible not to contrast the brilliant *active* service of God in the case of one who had remarkable gifts (not the least that rare gift of humour, which is so closely akin to sympathy), with a service of God even harder, the key to which lies in those four simple words, "Thy will be done!" A friend who wrote to me after paying her a visit in her illness, told me, "Speaking of the care and will of God, she said how it helped her when in pain at night, to feel that she was working away at His will, or some words to that effect, and in that *active* tone!"

I should not infringe on the sacredness of

a sick-room, did I not feel that these lessons are well for us *all* to learn. If people of elder years have their warnings, so have the younger among us. A bright young life of promise has lately closed in our near neighbourhood, a beautiful voice is hushed for ever;<sup>1</sup> and the old old thought forces itself upon us, Some day, I too shall have to go down the rocky descent, to the black brook of sorrow. Shall I be able to use it for a well? If a great sudden trouble ever came, should I be at all fit to meet it? Am I *now* doing God's will because it is His will, or only because it happens to be congenial to myself? Am I in the right path or not?

We may find our plunge into the valley of weeping a very sudden one. Going down a precipitous ravine we shall be to be pitied indeed, if once we lose the path—the *only* way of safety in a dangerous descent. Going down into trouble we shall be still more to be pitied, if we go astray from the will of God. But even sorrow may be a time of refreshment, a

<sup>1</sup> Written shortly after the death of a young friend with remarkable musical gifts.

source of strength, "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up his head." "Going through the vale of misery they use it for a well," as our Prayer-book has it. But there is one other passage in the Bible I should like to refer you to, and that is Acts xxi. 14. Here we have almost the same words in the Lord's Prayer. When Agabus has prophesied of the bonds and afflictions that await St. Paul, and the brethren at his side are entreating him not to go up to Jerusalem ; as at length they acquiesce in his courageous resolve saying, *Τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Κυρίου γενέσθω.*

Here, then, is one more call to unite ourselves with the will of God, and when we see others prepared to suffer for Christ, not to murmur or to oppose, but to acquiesce, and even to rejoice (cf. Eph. iii. 13, 14). If we believe, as we do believe, that to make our will one with the will of God is the highest and most Christ-like thing, woe be to us if we oppose ourselves to God's dealings with others' souls, if we are bitter because we see others suffer ; if, when the path leads through the valley of Baca and the

brook Kidron we seek to hinder the pilgrim on his way. Some of you are, or may be, soldiers' daughters, or sisters or wives, some day. Do not grudge them to the service of God and their country. So with the clergy. Do not let us grudge them to the service of Christ and His poor. So with many others we love, in different ways. Let us say, "Thy will be done" for others as well as for ourselves; let us stimulate their courage by our prayers. Let us not try to hinder Paul from going up to Jerusalem; let us when souls are kneeling in *their* Gethsemanes, in *their* Passion tide, try not to be like the faint-hearted apostles, but the strengthening angel, and let us unite our wills with the wills of all who make the example of Christ their own. Thus, and thus only, can the valley of weeping lead up to the hill of the Lord; thus only can we and they go from strength to strength, until unto the God of gods appeareth every one in Zion.

## VII.

# GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

## PART I.

Read Exod. xvi. 14-23.

THERE are two noteworthy points in the wording of this petition, which perhaps it may be worth while to notice at the outset. One is that while St. Matthew says, "Give us this day our daily bread," St. Luke says, "Give us day by day," etc. There is a slight difference in the meaning of the two phrases, but they are identical in spirit—in the idea that, as our Lord Himself says, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and therefore sufficient unto the day is the remedy for that evil.

The other point relates to the translation of

that difficult word ἐπιούσιος, which our versions render by "daily," or "bread for the coming day," but which might be rendered by "sufficient." The word ἐπιούσιος is peculiar to the New Testament. It is formed by analogy to, and to contrast with the well-known word περίουσιος (superfluous), and is best illustrated by Prov. xxx. 8, "food convenient for me"—my proper portion. On the whole it would seem as if our word "daily" was the best, because the most idiomatic rendering of the idea to be conveyed, and we are reminded that just as when the manna was given in the wilderness, "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack," so we are now to ask God to give us our own due share, neither more nor less, of all those blessings which are known as "daily bread."

We might do well this evening to think of the literal, and next week of the spiritual meaning of this most comprehensive petition. It begins by a recognition that all we have is the *gift* of God. Bread is a very appropriate and suggestive thing, because so much, not only of God's

gift, but of human labour has gone to its production, both in the cultivation of the corn and in its preparation for human food. Indirectly, therefore, we recognize the truth that not only the fruits of the earth, but our power to cultivate and prepare them for our use is the gift of God. And, as bread is the staff of life, when we pray for daily bread we also pray for something without which all our powers and faculties, on which we pride ourselves so much, would soon cease to profit us. We pray, in fact, for Life itself to Him who is the Giver of Life—a special epithet of God the Holy Ghost (in the Nicene Creed).

To-day is Whitsunday, and we have had a remarkable First Lesson from Deut. xvi., where we are reminded that seven weeks elapsed since the Feast of Passover when the first sheaf of the harvest was waved before the Lord (Lev. xxiii. 5, 6, 10, 11 ; cf. 1 Cor. xv. 20). You will notice that at the Passover a *sheaf* was waved before the Lord, but at the Day of Pentecost *loaves* were offered (Lev. xxiii. 15-17), as if to symbolize the first beginnings, and the perfect



completion of God's gifts. Notice, too, that at Pentecost the bread was *leavened*. In Deut. xvi. 3, the unleavened bread is called the bread of affliction, and reminded the Israelites of their hurried escape from Egypt. Consequently both that and the bitter herbs are absent from the joyful ceremonies of Pentecost. During those seven weeks—between Easter and Whitsuntide, or Passover and Pentecost—harvest work had gone on all over Palestine—one can fancy what busy weeks they were ; one can see Ruth among the maidens of Boaz ; one can hear the echoes of the beautiful harvest hymn, "Thou visitest the earth and blessest it," or the gladsome notes of the hundred and forty-seventh psalm, "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Sion. . . . He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the flour of wheat," and one can understand what Isaiah means (ix. 3) when he says, "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest."

But we must not forget the glorious psalm appointed for this evening (civ.), which from beginning to end is an ascription of praise to

God as the Giver of all good in the natural world, to birds and beasts and creeping things, and above all to man (*vv.* 14, 15, 23, 24, 33, etc.). Here we see "daily bread" taken in its widest sense as "all things needful for our souls and bodies." The springs that run among the hills, the winds that blow, the sun that shines, the labours of men and animals, are all so many gifts of God's mercy to His creatures (*v.* 28). Indeed, we may say that by implication the words, "Give us this day our daily bread," are a thanksgiving also, for surely a gift implies gratitude on the part of the receiver as much as it implies bounty on that of the giver.

In praying for daily bread what is there that we do not ask for? Fruitful seasons, health, peace, concord, the power to earn our own livelihood, or provision in some other way for that livelihood. We recognize that all these things are God's gift. Ah, if only we *did* recognize it a little more! we to whom the necessities and comforts of life come almost automatically, to whom they are as much a part of the received order of things as the rising of the sun itself,

that we forget how hardly the necessities of life are often won by others.

“Pater ipse colendi  
Haud facilem esse viam voluit,”

(says Virgil). The Father Himself did not will that the path of agriculture should be an easy one, he first caused fields to be tilled by the skill of men, sharpening their faculties by cares—

“primusque per artem  
Movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda.”  
(Georgics, i. 121.)

Perhaps some of us have thought that a questionable speech of Jacob's, when he said to Isaac of the venison which he professed to have caught, “Because the Lord thy God brought it to me;” but it illustrates well what must have often been the feeling of a primitive huntsman, dependent for his next meal on what he was able to cater for himself in wood or field, when the game he was in search of seemed almost providentially sent in his hour of need.

And even now such luxuries and comforts as the more prosperous classes in England have

are quite the exception, not the rule. If we took the population of the world all over, how many should we find who were sure of a meal to-morrow, to say nothing of other things which we should esteem the barest necessities? It would be sad indeed if the fact that God has laden us with so many blessings should make us less grateful to Him than are many whose blessings are apparently fewer; but I fear this is sometimes the case. It is not every one who is—

“Ready to give thanks, and live  
On the least that Heaven may give.”

Yet even those to whom the luxuries and comforts of life seem most assured, must have had moments when they, too, were reminded on what a slender thread their prosperity hung. Just now I am thinking of well-to-do parents who have one only boy, the very apple of their eye, who has been at death's door in consequence of some disease of the throat, for which several operations have been necessary. One knows how every luxury money could buy in the way of food would be placed at the service

of a child like that, and how the parents would look at the healthy village children with their poor fare and sigh with envy as they thought of the contrast. It is possible to die of starvation, even in the midst of plenty, and if it is painful to us to see the untouched plate of hardly-procured delicacies sent down from a sick-room, even this disappointment is not without its lesson—a much-needed lesson—that the rich as well as the poor are absolutely dependent on God's good pleasure for every meal they eat. It is not long since we had the spectacle of an Emperor of Germany who, despite all that human skill could do, sank in all the otherwise unimpaired vigour of his manhood, amid all the splendours of a throne, from a fatal throat disease.

Then there is that little word “us,” not too small to be noticed and thought about. Even in our private prayers we do not, I hope, say, “Give *me* this day *my* daily bread.” Whom do we mean by *us*? Every one in the world, since God is the Father of *all*. Well, now, if we ask God to give daily bread to others as

well as ourselves, we must not be such hypocrites as not to *do* even as we pray. I do not mean that we ought to give to street beggars ; but we may well lay to heart the words of Bishop Wilson, " Give me a tender compassion for the wants and miseries of my neighbour, that Thou mayest have compassion upon me, O God." When we say this prayer, surely we think of any cases of need or distress among rich or poor, and pray God to have pity on them, with an implied resolve to do what in us lies for the relief or comfort of the sufferers ; and it is one of the advantages we ought to gain by saying the Lord's Prayer the first thing in the morning, that it makes us pause and think of the special needs of others which come within our own range, and, perhaps, brings to our minds some ways in which we may be helpful to them. The ways may be very small ones, but let us not neglect them. We may be sure that He who multiplied those loaves and fishes of old can bless even our humblest efforts—a letter, a visit, the loan of a book, a trifling gift, a small self-denial. If

when you get up in the morning you rise from your knees with *one* resolution to do a simple act of kindness, or even of justice, the Lord's Prayer will not have been, for you, a mere form of words.

Then let us think of the words, "this day," or "day by day," reminding us of our Lord's teaching to take no thought for to-morrow. The life, He says, is more than meat, and the body than raiment; in other words, we are to trust Him who made the body the wonderful organization it is, to provide for it when once called into existence.

But how is it, then, that so many people are starving? Usually this, the old story, that man has it in his power to thwart God's good purposes by his own folly, cruelty, or neglect. Bread is not a thing that will drop into our mouths without any trouble on our part. We must sow it, and reap it, and thresh it, and winnow it, and grind it, and knead it, and bake it. We must make a plough to prepare the ground for it, we must make a mill to grind it in; if we will not take trouble for ourselves

even such a simple thing as bread can never be brought into existence. I shall never forget going to Spain, and seeing countries where the careful irrigation of the Moors had produced plentiful crops, now turned to arid wastes, simply through the neglect of their successors. So with cutting down trees in India, and consequent lack of rain. How many of us, too, have felt our hearts ache at the sight of a ragged, emaciated set of puny children, whose father or mother drank? It was not God that let those children starve. We had no right to expect He would work a miracle to prevent it. It is of little use our praying this prayer unless we all in our degree try to help on its fulfilment. If any man will not work neither shall he eat (cf. Prov. xii. 10, 11 ; xiii. 22, 23 ; xix. 15 ; xxiii. 21). Industry and forethought are real, indispensable duties.

But in the majority of cases it is, doubtless, a matter of experience that over anxiety defeats its own end, and that such worry as we sometimes see about the future is something worse than waste of time. We shall feel this



if, at the end of the year, we count up our blessings, and then think how few of them we could have anticipated, and feel rebuked for our want of faith in Him who sent them. And here another interesting point suggests itself. The wise economy of God's dealings. He gives us what is ἐπιούσιον—He does not give what is περιούσιον. Recall for a moment the earliest flowers of the year. Look at a snowdrop, it is pure white, very simple in form, the leaves also very simple and quiet in colour ; yet what intense joy it gives you. It is quite enough to make you happy *then*—you do not want more. Most of the early spring flowers partake of the same character. A snowdrop is, if one may so say, sufficient in its day ; sufficient after a long dreary winter to fill us with the joy its beauty gives. Almost all English spring flowers are small ; there is a kind of reserve of Nature's resources ; they are not lavished on us at once. We are made happy later on with daffodils and wallflowers. The delicious colour and rich scent are also "sufficient" in their day, and so we go on and on to the June roses and all

the brilliant wealth of autumn. So it is with the development of children. You would think a child could not be more charming than it is at three months old till you find how much more charming it can be at six, and later on.

Thus with races and nations. God gives each generation what is ἐπιούσιον—not what is περιούσιον—sufficient, not superfluous. See, then, what mistakes we make when we give children the stimulating food, the expensive clothes, the exciting amusements of grown-up life before their time, or when we give savages or untaught people the so-called advantages of civilized life before they are prepared for them. Do not let us be in too great a hurry to have what is sufficient for to-morrow as well as sufficient for the day. The manna when so gathered bred worms, and stank, and I am afraid some of us now want, if such a phrase may be used, to anticipate their blessings too eagerly. The whole tendency of the age runs that way, in England, and still more on the other side of the Atlantic, the consequence often being that life has few interests left for

us after middle age. Then, too, let us remember it is *bread* we ask for ; we are not taught to ask for luxuries. Mr. Ruskin has said that the great painters of the world did their work on the very poorest and simplest fare—their work was meat and drink to them. How truly happy we should be if we could love the work God has called *us* to do so heartily as to care little for anything else in comparison! Then, perhaps, we should understand the words of Him who said, as He gazed on the fields of Palestine, white already to harvest, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.”

I must reserve for another time what I have to say on some of the spiritual aspects of these words.

## PART II.

Read Gen. xiv. 18-24.

MOST of us who are acquainted with early Christian art will remember how, from almost primitive times, this history of Melchizedek has found a place among the types which bear upon the sacramental commemoration of the Death of Christ, and still speaks to us from the glowing mosaics of the walls of Ravenna, where silent faces, that looked down on the worshippers of twelve hundred years ago, testify, in unimpaired beauty, of the faith which was in the Church of those days as it is in the Church of our own.

We have the authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews for applying this history in Genesis, and the words of Ps. cx., to Christ.

Let us think once more of this most significant passage. It is the first place in Hebrew history where the word "priest" occurs. It seems a far cry from the days of Abraham to our own,

but that surname "Cohen," so familiar to all who visit among the Jewish poor in London or elsewhere, and meaning "priest," keeps alive to-day in our ears the very word that first occurs in sacred history in this 14th chapter of Genesis. And notice that it is there used of some one antecedent to, and outside of, the Levitical law, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has reminded us (Heb. vii. 11).

Let us next notice that Melchizedek is *not* called the priest of Jehovah (a name specially in use among the Jews), but of the most High God, and that the epithet given to God, "Possessor of heaven and earth," is a very rare one in the Bible. It may interest you to know that we have the verb Kanah, "to possess," in the name Elkanah (possession of God) in 1 Sam. i. Melchizedek, therefore, comes forth as the representative of God, Who is the Possessor and Giver of all good. The bread and wine is given, the blessing bestowed, in that Name, and Abram uses the same phrase a little later on (Gen. xiv. 22), and it is worth noticing that Abram, the Hebrew, here speaks of God, "the

Possessor of heaven and earth," as "Jehovah," though Melchizedek had not done so; and because the God whom Melchizedek represents is the Possessor or Creator of heaven and earth, Abram gives Him tithes of all ("Of His own do we give unto Him").

We must pass over many of the thoughts suggested by this wonderful figure of Melchizedek, and confine ourselves to one special aspect, that in which he appears as a type of our Lord, as the manifestation of God, Who is the Creator and Possessor of the universe, and at Whose hands we receive the Bread and Wine of Life—all things needful both for our souls and bodies.

The Holy Communion is not *only* a memorial of Christ's death, it is a means of grace; nor is it only a direct means of grace in itself, but it symbolizes to us *every* good thing which God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, bestows upon us. When we kneel at the Eucharistic feast, do we not acknowledge God as the Giver of every good, spiritual and temporal, that comes to us at every moment of our lives?

"Thine, O Lord," says Thomas à Kempis, in a prayer very familiar to some of us, "Thine are all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth. I desire to offer myself to Thee as a free oblation, and to continue Thine for ever." When our Lord says, "I am the Bread of Life," He implies, by those words, that it is to Him we owe every good thing we can possibly receive. Every means by which our souls are fed and strengthened and refreshed, everything that helps us to live spiritually, comes to us through Him. God created all things by Jesus Christ (Eph. iii. 9). Think what that means. Not only external nature, but all that the highest poetry and the noblest art have superinduced upon it; not only our ordinary human relationships, but all that makes those relationships holy and pure and loveable; not only intellectual knowledge, but all that is consecrated to higher uses in the world of thought, of study, and of books; all that we gain by reading the word of God, by prayer and praise; all that the force of good example can teach us; all the wholesome encouragement or counsel we

receive; all the gifts of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son—all these are what we mean when we speak of “daily bread.” A good book, a good thought, a good talk, that gives us clear insight into our duty, some happiness granted us, perhaps, in the midst of sorrow, some chastening sent us, perhaps, in the midst of joy, are not all these things our daily bread? Do we not ask God for them in this prayer? Do we not, when we kneel at the Holy Communion, by that simple outward act, confess our dependence on God for the supply of *all* our needs? Our Lord did not say, “Do this in remembrance of My death,” though that, it need hardly be said, and as St. Paul has reminded us, is specially commemorated by the Holy Communion; but “Do this in remembrance of Me”—of Me, the Creative Word, the Source and Fountain of Life.

When we say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we therefore ask God to give us all things necessary for our spiritual life. We know in our Lord’s temptation how Satan said



to Him, "Command that these stones be made bread." And our Lord conversely says, "What man is there among you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" Those who follow Satan's leading are always trying, and trying vainly, to turn stones into bread. Midas, we are told, had the power of turning everything he touched into gold, and died of starvation. Equally powerless to nourish us are the stones which in this life we sometimes vainly try to turn to bread when Satan offers us something that makes a false show of being able to nourish us, but from which we turn disappointed and unsatisfied away. He does this even when he represents to us literal bread—satisfaction of bodily needs—as the principal thing to be aimed at. Our Lord rebukes him and says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The word of God then—more especially Holy Scripture—is, or ought to be, our daily bread.

There is a great deal of semi-unbelief in the present day, and once again let me suggest that much of it comes from the shallowness of our

religious knowledge. The Holy Scriptures are *the* things that are able to make us wise unto salvation. As years go on I am more and more struck by the mental laziness which withholds us from the study of our Bibles. We little know what a highly organized whole the teaching of revelation is. Very few—even good people—in the present day, have any conception of the vast amount of mind, of system, of harmony, of deep consistent thought and far-stretching symbolism there is between the two covers of those Bibles whose gilt edges look so suspiciously clean, whose pages stick together as if seldom turned, yet which will some day prove to be our judges. “The word which I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day,” our Lord says Himself.

The Bible offers a perpetual protest against the superficial way in which we read and think nowadays, and if we find its study costs us an effort, think, on the other hand, how much we as English men and women owe to having had to make that effort—intellectually almost as much as spiritually. Thinness of thought,

poverty of imagination, are the bane of our own day, but no one who reads and studies his Bible can sink quite so low as he or she who does not. But to return.

If we read the sixth chapter of St. John, we shall see that the words Jesus Christ—bread—life—are all, as it were, synonymous. Just as by literal bread our literal life is preserved, so it is with spiritual life when it partakes of Christ. And now we come to the point of connection between the Holy Communion and the death of Christ. The Bread which I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world. Our fallen nature needs redemption as well as creation. The word *flesh* starts us on a new thought, that of death, of the shedding of blood, of life laid down that life may be preserved. The Holy Communion unites in itself not only the sin-offering of the Jewish Church, but the meat-offering, the whole burnt-offering, and the peace-offering also. Let us consider these offerings for a few moments.

We not unnaturally shrink from reading portions of the Mosaic Law—especially what

is sometimes spoken of as the "priestly code"—but though it is not necessary for us to dwell on every detail, the main outlines of the ideas conveyed by it have a real bearing on our own Communion office.

In the case of the sin-offering—the *atoning* sacrifice—the effusion of blood was the most characteristic feature; the flesh was either consumed by fire or partaken of by the priest alone. The details of the ordinary sin-offering will be found in Lev. iv., v., and those of the sacrifices of the Great Day of Atonement in Lev. xvi. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22; cf. *vv.* 13, 14).

This is one aspect of the Holy Communion, the commemoration of the sacrifice and atoning death of Christ. But there is another and most interesting one—the meat-offering, or, more correctly, *meal*-offering. (Let us remember that our modern English use of the word meat as *animal* food is quite misleading here.) The Minchah, or meat-offering, was an adjunct to the burnt-offering (see Lev. ii. 1-4), and is therefore here mentioned after it. It was usually

joined with a drink-offering of wine (Lev. xxiii. 13; Exod. xxix. 40). The burnt-offering was the sacrifice of one of God's animal creatures to which man's labour contributed nothing, but the meat-offering was an offering in which human labour intervened, being either of fine flour and sometimes oil or parched corn. It was offered wholly to God, and not partaken of by the offerer. A part of it was burnt on the altar with frankincense, and this was called the memorial (Lev. ii. 9, 10).

All the ancient Christian Fathers assert that this was a figure of that perpetual memory that is made of the precious death of Christ by means of God's creatures of bread and wine solemnly offered to Him in the Holy Eucharist—and thus the words of Malachi are fulfilled (Mal. i. 11) where "a pure offering" is a pure *Minchah*, or gift; and it also represented the oblation of ourselves and all our works to God. Cf. First Post Communion Collect—or, as the Second Post Communion prayer has it, "that we may do all such good works as Thou hast prepared for us to walk in."

But there was another sacrifice—the peace-offering, which *was* partaken of by the worshipper.<sup>1</sup> The sin-offering comes first, because there is no approach to God before the expiation and atonement made by the Blood of Christ. The burnt-offering comes next, as expressing His perfect self-dedication, and our consequent duty of offering ourselves as living sacrifices. The meat-offering, added to the burnt-offering, represents the perpetual *memorial* of His sacrifice, and our oblations sanctified in Him to God. Then at length succeeded the peace-offering, in which the idea of *communion* is specially brought out (Lev. vii. 14, 15), as in it the worshipper was also a partaker, and it thus anticipates the thought in the Book of Revelation (Rev. iii. 20). “If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” But it was not only communion with God, but with one another. The peace-offering represented charity with our neighbour as well as love of God

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bishop C. Wordsworth’s “Commentary” on Leviticus viii. 14, and his introduction to that book.

(2 Sam. vi. 17, 18; 1 Kings viii. 64, 65. Cf. Deut. xii. 6, 7).

How wonderfully all these ideas are summed up in our Communion Service—that service with its *Agnus Dei*, that early Christian hymn to the Lamb of God that taketh away the *sin* of the world, the one and only offering for sin; with its oblation of self, like a whole burnt-offering to God, with its meat-offering, its oblation of God's gifts under the form of bread and wine, and its *memorial* of the death of Christ, and lastly, with its peace-offering, where we hold communion with God as guests at His table, and with one another, in perfect love. The kiss of peace is no longer given, nor even the pax which in mediæval times was substituted for it, a plate of gold or silver<sup>1</sup> stamped with the image of the crucifix, and passed round by one worshipper to another as a token of mutual love; but how dear to every heart are the words, "Glory be to God on high,

<sup>1</sup> An interesting illustration of this may be found in Archdeacon Perry's "Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln," where Richard Cœur de Lion signifies his desire for reconciliation, by himself handing the Pax to the intrepid Bishop (ch. vii., p. 271) immediately after the *Agnus Dei*.

and on earth peace, good will towards men," which follow every administration of the Holy Eucharist, and how we love to linger at its close on the thought of that Peace of God which passeth all understanding!

I can hardly conclude better than with the beautiful words of the prayer in the "Didaché" or "Teaching of the Apostles" (ch. ix.).

"As this broken bread was (once) scattered upon the mountains and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom."<sup>1</sup> How exquisitely does this supply the link between the harvest-parables in the Gospel and in St. Paul (1 Cor. xv.) with that other circle of teaching which we find in the sixth chapter of St. John, and how wonderful is the mind of God which not only works so marvellously in the literal harvest field, and in the literal supply of human needs, but has penetrated all these processes of nature, these arts of labour, with an imperishable spiritual meaning!

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the Bishop of Salisbury's "Four Visitation Addresses on the Holy Communion," to which I am largely indebted.



When we say this petition of the Lord's Prayer, we ought (particularly on those days when we hope to communicate) to use it with a special reference to the pardon and grace which we implore by means of that Blessed Sacrament, and with special thankfulness in our minds to Him Who is the Bread of Life, and in Whom we are "one bread, and one body," which must imply being, as the Catechism says, "in charity with all men."

\* \* \* It will be seen that in the above address little or no attempt has been made to speak of many most important aspects of the Holy Communion. To treat at any length of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, of the Eternal Priesthood and Intercession of our Lord, and of His Sacramental Presence, would have been completely to alter the plan of the present little volume; while it would have required not only the special training of a theologian, but the highest spiritual gifts, to handle subjects on which a reverential silence is more befitting than imperfect and unworthy speech.

## VIII.

### FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES.

#### PART I.

Read 1 John iv. 7 ; Ep. First Sunday after Trinity.

THERE are few subjects in which the advance made by Christianity on other religions is more strongly marked than in its teaching about sin, and consequently about forgiveness. I do not mean at present our forgiveness of one another, but God's forgiveness of us. The subject is an enormously vast one ; to-night I mean chiefly to dwell upon the different standards of sin and righteousness, and thence of the need of forgiveness which have prevailed at different times in the world, and on the indirect testimony this offers to Christianity.

If we take humanity at a comparatively early

stage, we shall find that one of its first developments is a sense of the criminality of injustice, of the cruelty of the strong to the weak. Some of the earlier Psalms in the Psalter will illustrate this (see Ps. xxxvi. 1-7, xxxvii. 1, 2, and many others), but it is not confined to the Bible. Frequent examples will occur to our minds in Greek legend and tragedy of the punishment of a man who is cruel and unjust. There is in human nature a sense that we have no right to take unfair advantages over one another—the constant protest which is kept up for instance against tyrants who abuse their power, the indignation which even very rude minds can feel at cruelty to the helpless, is a commonplace of legend and literature. Take our own ballad of the Children in the Wood for a popular example of the kind of story which, in all ages, has stirred the sympathies even of the very roughest of human beings.

“*Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor!*” (*Æn.* iv. 625) is the last agonized cry of Dido, as she appeals to Heaven’s justice against the cruel perfidy of *Æneas* and prays that, from

her very bones, an avenger may arise. Even Virgil is carried away, and carries us away, by an instinctive sympathy for the victim of injustice; and the great hero of the Roman race is for the moment shamed and eclipsed by the woman whom he has forsaken. The last speech of Dido is the highest point of pathos reached in the entire poem. As an almost inevitable consequence of this sense of injustice comes a belief in, and appeal to God as one who sees, and will some day right the wrong—"O Sun, whose rays behold all the works done on the earth: O vengeful Furies and gods of dying Elissa, mark these things and turn your merited wrath upon the wicked, and hearken to my prayer."<sup>1</sup> Or, as Psalm lviii. 10 expresses it, "So that a man shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."

When we think of the subject of forgiveness,

<sup>1</sup> "Sol qui terrarum flammis opera omnia lustras,

Et Diræ ultrices, et Dî morientis Elissæ

Accipite hæc, meritumque malis advertite numen

Et nostras audite preces" (*Æn.* iv. 607).

and of sin that needs forgiveness, we may place, therefore, at the head of the list all those sins of cruelty, barbarity, and injustice which have stained the human conscience, from the death of Abel to the French Revolution, and which, alas, even now prevail in the dark places of the world, and indeed of England.

Next to them, and often mixed up with them, are sins of dishonesty and fraud—sins not so much against life as against property, and under this head, we may also include sins against the marriage tie—on such an offence we may remember the whole of the “*Iliad*” turns, and we may observe that the cause of the wrath of the gods is traced further back to the dishonesty of Laomedon in attempting to cheat them of the bargain he had made with them.

It is easy to see that sins of this class were recognized even in the heathen world as needing forgiveness, and we find parallels to them in Hebrew history, *e.g.* in the story of Saul’s injustice to David, and of David’s own injustice to Uriah the Hittite, etc.

We also find in cases of this kind, a constant

appeal from humanity to God to punish the offenders, and sometimes a sense in the offender's own mind, that he is pursued by the displeasure of God. Endless instances in support of this might be quoted ; but we must, just now, only stop to observe that as one very early and widespread idea of God was that of a Being who would sooner or later avenge the evil and right the wrong of this world ; so, as the fear of God, at first mere savage superstition, and afterwards a deeper sense of awe, developed in mankind, a third class of sins—sins against God's own dignity and majesty—were early recognized. Every one knows how profanations of a temple or an image were visited on the offender, and of the parallels to these things in Hebrew history, the punishment on him who touched the ark, the severity with which all the avenues to contact with sacred things were guarded.

Similarly we have human pride and presumption constantly punished. Any one who vies with the gods, any one who exalts himself above what is seemly for humanity, as Clytemnestra tried to make Agamemnon do when she

spread a carpet for his feet ; any one who boasts himself and his greatness, like Nebuchadnezzar, is marked out for Divine displeasure.

Here, again, are sins which humanity itself sees must be atoned for, and forgiven. The broad bold outlines cannot be missed ; outside the Bible as well as in it we find that cruelty, injustice, treachery, blasphemy, and kindred offences are displeasing alike to God and man. And so far the need of forgiveness is tolerably obvious, and "natural" and "revealed" religion are pretty much of one mind on the subject.

But when we come to Christianity we are conscious of a change. Perhaps it may have surprised us sometimes that our Lord's invectives in the Gospels on the one hand, and His beatitudes on the other, do not dwell primarily on sins such as we have been considering. What our Lord specially inveighs against is hypocrisy, and spiritual pride, in His discourses ; and, as we said the other day, in His parables, against sins of omission ; while in the beatitudes a special class of virtues is selected, almost to the exclusion of the rest.

Here, I think, we find an interesting and important argument, if such were needed, in support of Christianity. It starts where natural religion leaves off. It gives us a standard which natural religion could never have attained, though we see the highest and best of men feeling after it, gaining glimpses of it; how pathetic is a figure for instance like Marcus Aurelius, touching the very skirts of higher things, but unable to gain that firm hold on them which would make them certain to himself and communicable to others! Christianity strikes a note we could not have reached unaided, but which finds an echo in our hearts.

I have asked you to take this historical view of the subject, because I think it is one that will be practically very helpful to us, in our thoughts about sin and forgiveness.

"Doctor, I have not been a *great* sinner," were the words of Lord Nelson to the chaplain who attended him in his last moments.

"Doctor, I have not been a *great* sinner," is what, perhaps, many of us might be tempted to repeat. We have not been guilty of violence,



cruelty, fraud, impurity, or blasphemy. Sometimes when we go through books of self-examination we, perhaps, cannot honestly say, "Yes ; this touches me," to more than one or two of the questions. We give ourselves easy absolution for the rest.

See how our Church,<sup>1</sup> after having since Advent trained us up gradually in a course of Christian dogma, now once more begins her teaching on Christian practice with this parable about the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man in Nathan's parable addressed to David, is blamed for cruelty and injustice, sins recognized by our natural human instincts ; the rich man in our Lord's parable was guilty of what many of us would call venial sins, but mark the severity of his doom ! If Dives had had one of our books of self-examination, I dare say he would have put it down with a self-satisfied smile and the thought that, after all, *he* had very little to reproach himself with. Nobody says that he grudged the crumbs from his table to Lazarus any more than we grudge our

<sup>1</sup> Spoken on First Sunday after Trinity.

fellow creatures the odds and ends of time or property that cost us nothing. But it is awful when we think how little mere easy-going good nature, without self-denial—that kind of *bon-homie* which tradition ascribes to Charles II., counts for in the treasury of God. But once more, consider what sin looks like in the eyes of Christ. Is it not almost certain that our sins will prove, on examination, to be rather sins of omission, than of commission?

We have not been cruel, but have we been as loving as we might have been? We have not been unjust or fraudulent; but have we been quite as generous (and by generosity, I do not mean only *money* generosity) as we ought to have been? Oh, it is very awful, is it not? to be so prosperous, so little tempted, so very much the reverse of persecuted in religious matters, that our responsibility seems to lie not in what we have to avoid, but what we have to do; not in what we have to pull down, but what we have to build up. I do not say it is *entirely* so, or so with everybody, or that we are in no sense liable to the sins which earlier

generations had so sorely to repent of; but it is unquestionably true that we have a responsibility laid upon us all the heavier because we are tempted to take it so lightly—a responsibility for growing and developing, for taking our talents to the exchangers and making them double; for looking out and hunting up those who are sick or in prison; for trying to get more oil in our own lamps, that our spiritual lives may burn more brightly. Here it is that we fail; here it is that we should be strict with ourselves; here it is that we need forgiveness.

One reason, doubtless, why so many of us like a college student's life in Oxford, with a certain number of routine duties, is because it minimizes the other sort of duties. If you have every hour of your day mapped out, you cannot, you think, be expected to look after Lazarus. It is so much easier to have our duties looking out for us than to have to go and look out for our duties. Now the more we like living by routine, the more we ought to be on our guard. All those faculties of observation, of reflection,

of imaginative reconstruction of other people's lives, are apt to be much blunted in a life of pure routine, and we have known persons here and elsewhere, to whom this has been a very real temptation. When we try to think of the sins for which we desire forgiveness, then, let us bear this in mind—let us pray not to be stupid and unobservant and stinted and mechanical in our religion. Let us ask ourselves whether we take some pains to discover our neighbours' characters and needs. I think sometimes of a lady guardian whose business it was to visit children boarded out in cottages. Many people in her place would have been satisfied to see that the children's hands and faces and pinafores were clean, but she found it was quite necessary to ascertain not only that the cleanly process was carried on below the pinafores, but to have the children's shoes taken off, that she might see their feet were not cramped and pinched. If we could only carry that kind of thoroughness into our care for others, and think not only of what can be seen at a hasty glance, we might be some comfort to Lazarus yet ; to

the rich Lazarus as well as the poor ones ; to people who are surrounded with every comfort, but who get put off with the merest crumbs of affection, as well as to those who are ragged outwardly.

Sins of neglect, sins of a low standard, sins of omission—these are, in most cases, our sins. Sometimes, perhaps, sins of spiritual pride, sometimes, perhaps, of almost unconscious hypocrisy—picking up good phrases from good people and using them without quite meaning what we say.

But let us not forget the Epistle.<sup>1</sup> Which of us comes up to *that* standard—the standard of the love of God as well as of our neighbour ? Can any one be satisfied with himself when he once gets a glimpse of his own shortcomings in this respect ?

Now and then one has known girls admitted for the first time into a happy home, and how they have exclaimed, “You won’t, perhaps, believe it, but I never knew what love was before.” The girl had had a kind of natural

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 7.

religion, so to speak—she had known, as the old Greeks and Romans had, it was wrong to murder and steal ; but of all the exquisite delicacy and beauty of a life, where home affections were called into play, she had never even dreamed. But as she gained a new conception of love she gained a new conception also of duty. She could not be satisfied with the old standard. Now what happy home life was to the poor friendless girl, that the Church has been to poor humanity. She has given it a conception of love which it never had before. But in so doing it she has increased its responsibility. She has made it more wrong for it not to be loving. The just man was the ideal of philosophers before Christ—the loving man, and the loving woman, is the ideal of Christianity. “He doeth much who loveth much,” says Thomas à Kempis. “Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much,” says our Lord (Luke vii. 47), “but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little.” This is a difficult passage, but I suppose it means that till love has given us a high standard of what

we ought to be, we do not half realize how much we need forgiveness. When we say, "Forgive us our trespasses," we surely ask God to forgive us because we have loved so very very little, because now that we have been taken into His home, the Church, we have been such cold-hearted children, such unsympathetic brothers and sisters, because we have valued the blessings of our home so lightly, because we have done so little to bring others into the light and warmth of that fireside, because we have been selfish, because we have been self-willed, because we have not trusted more, and thanked more, and rejoiced more. These are the things for which most of us need to ask forgiveness ; these are the things for the pardon of which our Lord, Who has been sent, as to-day's Epistle tells us, to be the propitiation for our sins,<sup>1</sup> still intercedes for us ; these are the things to which the weakness of our mortal nature is ever prone ; and it is

<sup>1</sup> May I refer, for a further treatment of this subject, especially as regards the Atonement, to my "Illustrations of the Creed ;" especially the "Forgiveness of Sins" ?

against these that we implore the help of His grace, that in keeping of His commandments, and especially His great commandment of love, we may please Him both in will and deed.

Next time I shall hope to say something about forgiveness of others.

## PART II.

### THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Read Matt. xviii. 21-35.

THIS parable, which seems our Lord's own comment on this petition of the Lord's Prayer, is remarkable because it combines the ideas of "debts" and "trespasses"—the "debts" (*ὀφειλήματα*) of St. Matthew, and the "sins" or "trespasses" of St. Luke. St. Matthew says, "Forgive us our debts" (*ὀφειλήματα*) "as we forgive our debtors." St. Luke says, "Forgive us our sins" (*ἁμαρτίας*, xi. 4), "for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." The word



trespasses (παραπτώματα), fallings aside from the way, which we have in this parable, is also found in Matthew vi. 14 ; and seems equivalent to ἁμαρτίαι—*missings* of the aim, the word usually translated as “sins ;” and St. Peter says here, “Lord, how oft shall my brother *sin* against me ?” (ἁμαρτήσῃ) Matt. xviii. 21. The word ἁμαρτάνω is also translated “trespass” (Luke xvii. 4), “If he trespass against thee seven times in a day,” etc. The parable turns upon debt and its remission, but our Lord sums it up by saying, “So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses,” thus clearly showing that “debts” stands for offences of every kind.

Next let us recall that this is one of the “parables of the kingdom,” to which allusion was made in speaking of “Thy kingdom come.” The kingdom of heaven is a place, or rather a state, in which man receives forgiveness for his sins, but only on condition that he himself forgives his neighbour. It has been calculated that 100 pence are 1,250,000 part of 10,000

talents—a part so small as to be practically inappreciable.

、 The debt we owe to God is thus represented as so vast as to be quite incommensurable with our neighbours' sins against us—the beam as opposed to the mote. And here, perhaps, some one will say, “But I really do not think I am so wicked as all that.” We may have read a modern novelette not long ago, in which the heroine was made to say, “God will not be surprised to find we have been as wicked as we are; but that, all things considered, we have been as good as we are.”<sup>1</sup> And I believe this is a rather bold expression of what a good many secretly feel. It may, too, be honestly added that it is possible to be very morbid about one's own sins, and to dwell on them till they blot out almost altogether Christian hope and joy. Doubtless the modern feeling on this matter is partly a reaction against the overstrained language about sin in some of our books of devotion, and possibly still more in some hymns, which will hardly bear quotation.

<sup>1</sup> “Ships that Pass in the Night,” Beatrice Harraden.

Perhaps the perplexity may be partly cleared up by a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon, where he says, in pleading for Onesimus, "Although I do not say unto thee how thou owest me even thine own self besides." Here it is clear that the debt is a debt of gratitude from Philemon to St. Paul for the gospel of Christ which Paul preached to him. May we not say that our debt to God is a great deal more than mere pardon of actual sin? It is the whole of our natural and spiritual life for which we are indebted to Him—be our sins many or few, our debt to God is overwhelming. If God were to exact from us an equivalent for all He has done for us, a whole eternity would not be sufficient to repay it. How miserable is it, then, for us to be hard on those who have received some paltry benefit at our hands, or who have committed some offence against us!

But are we quite sure that even in the matter of sins we have not more to be uneasy about than some of us are prepared to own? When we say, "as we forgive them that trespass

against us," we do not usually find it very difficult to think of some one who *has* trespassed against us! Many of us may think of some person or other who has done something which wounded us a good deal, but who, nevertheless, had probably gone to sleep that night without the smallest sense of having—in this respect—done anything to require forgiveness. It would open our eyes surprisingly if our friends gave us a list sometimes of our trespasses against *them*; we should find the list, I fear, considerably longer than that of what *we* regard as our own trespasses. It is only when Nathan comes to David that David realizes how great a sin he has been guilty of; and surely if this be true of our offences against our neighbour, it is no less true of our offences against God. It sometimes takes a long illness, a great sorrow, or a great bereavement, or, possibly, the shock of some sudden affliction to bring home to us how far our lives have been from trying to please God, how little, in fact, God has been in our thoughts at all. Perhaps at such times we may feel that God exacteth

from us less than our iniquity deserveth (Job xi. 6).

There is another point on which, perhaps, it would be well for us to gain a clearer conception. We are not to suppose that we are (so to speak) setting up ourselves as on a level with God, and saying that if we forgive others we have a claim on His forgiveness. Our forgiveness of others does not give us a claim on God's forgiveness, but is a condition of it.

"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." God has already forgiven us, but we cannot profit by that forgiveness so long as we cherish rancour in our hearts.

Our only true hope of forgiveness lies in the mercy of God through the merits of Jesus Christ. "Why, then," it may next be asked, "is there no direct reference to the Atonement in this prayer?" The Lord's Prayer was given at a comparatively early stage of our Lord's ministry, but was no doubt to be understood in the light of His later teaching, which we shall find becomes fuller and clearer on this

subject as time goes on, and more specially *after* His Passion (Matt. xx. 28; xxvi. 28; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts ii. 38; John xx. 22, 23).

And the very fact that this prayer for forgiveness is taught us by Christ, that He puts the words in our lips, in Whom alone we receive pardon and forgiveness, itself gives us hope that the prayer will be heard.

But we have in our Blessed Lord not only a Teacher, but an Example of forgiveness. In a certain sense, because He sums up Humanity in Himself, He places Himself in the attitude of one who asks for forgiveness, not for personal sin, but for those sins which in taking our Nature He took upon Himself (1 John ii. 1, 2; iii. 5; v. 12; Eph. iv. 13). It is very remarkable, therefore, that the moment of the crucifixion, when, as it were, the Sacrifice is being bound with cords, yea, even to the horns of the altar, the very moment in which Christ, as representing humanity, is about to win forgiveness from God, He sets us an example not only of obtaining forgiveness, but of forgiving

others—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

How are we trying to learn this lesson, to profit by this example? It is very difficult to say anything new on the subject of forgiveness. It is the tritest of all moral topics, and yet can any of us say that we have quite mastered the duty of forgiveness? It took a long while for Europe to learn the lesson of laying aside family feuds and hereditary quarrels; it may be doubted whether the lesson has even yet been thoroughly learned, whether there are not still Montagues and Capulets, Campbells and Macdonalds, Orsini and Colonnas among us, not quite in the old shapes, but with the old transmitted hatreds. A story like the "Mill on the Floss" shows us how such feelings may prevail even in dull, middle-class England, among the most prosaic surroundings. Commoner still are the petty dislikes between two families of near neighbours—perhaps the squire and parson of the same village, or two officers' families in the same regiment, or two rivals in business in the same manufacturing town—and

how much these dislikes and misunderstandings are fomented by the women of the family, how often quite innocent actions and well-meant proceedings are misinterpreted by them, we need, alas! no novelists to tell us. A bitter tongue is a terrible mischief-maker, and the "higher education" we boast of here will have done very little for us if we do not learn not only to check ourselves in direct evil-speaking, but in what Pope—however unfairly in the case of Addison—so effectively described when he spoke of rivals who—

"Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike,  
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike,  
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,  
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer."

Then there are a whole host of professional rivalries; unhappily, many women nowadays are only too conversant with such matters, and I need not suggest details, but if any of us here are ambitious, we may one day know what it is to be "cut out" by somebody else just in the thing on which we prided ourselves most, and find it very hard to forgive those who



surpass us, very hard not to be pleased when—as we say—their pride has a fall, very hard not to let our eyes glisten a little when we see a cutting notice of them in the paper, or hear that in one way or another they have been humiliated. The opposite to all these feelings is not, perhaps, technically to be called forgiveness, but in a greater or less degree it is the conquest of those vindictive and ungenerous emotions which, it is to be feared, are terribly strong in women, and come out often in the pettiest of petty triumphs; but just as the cat on the hearthrug of everyday life is first cousin to the tigress of the jungle, so that feline instinct in woman which rejoices in socially humiliating a rival, is closely akin to her love of vengeance on a larger scale.

Some of the most vindictive acts of mockery recorded in history were instigated by women. It is Margaret of Anjou, who, after the battle of Wakefield, is represented as placing the paper crown on the head of the Duke of York when he stands a prisoner of war before her, and mocks at him and his misfortunes, including

the loss of his darling son<sup>1</sup> (3 Hen. VI., act i. sc. 4); and history, both ancient and modern, has furnished us with some shocking examples of the effects of ill-will, rankling in the breasts of women.

The very fact that women are comparatively helpless makes them brood over real or fancied wrongs with greater intensity, and carry metaphorical if not literal daggers about with them, to be used when the longed-for moment comes. Have none of us ever carried a sharp repartee for weeks hidden in our bosoms till the opportunity arrived to utter it? Have we never stabbed any one in secret by a few words—a hint—a look—an expressive silence?

Another point. Have we really prayed, not only for ourselves, but that others might be forgiven? “If ye *from your hearts* forgive not,” is our Lord’s phrase.

It is, however, a dangerous, though a popular misconception that we are too much alive to the

<sup>1</sup> “Look, York ; I stained this napkin with his blood,  
And if thine eyes can water for his death  
I give thee this to dry thy cheeks withal.”

heinousness of other people's sins. We are, it is true, much annoyed with the sins of others *when they hurt us*, but we are much too easy-going with others as well as ourselves about sin in general. If we really loved our neighbour as ourselves we should take his sins to heart much more than we do. To love our neighbour as ourself seems to mean to love his *soul* as well as our own, and to be critical of his faults when we have any kind of responsibility for him, as (for instance) a good father is with his sons.

Supposing you hereafter are mothers, teachers, mistresses, or influential friends—you will be guilty of sin yourselves if you overlook sin in others, if you do not speak out and find fault when you ought, if you let things pass which you ought to notice—perhaps with a shrug, and “Anything for a quiet life” as your motto. It ought to hurt you very much when any one you love does wrong. You ought not to be like Eli, whose life seems recorded as a warning for all slack and easy-going Christians. “Anything for a quiet life” is the most ruinous of sayings

for any one who cares for the souls of others (1 Sam. ii. 13).

You cannot really forgive others unless you feel they have done wrong; you cannot feel they have done wrong without asking God to forgive them (and remember, the words of the Lord's Prayer are not "Forgive me," but "Forgive *us*"); you cannot ask God to forgive them without trying to do all you can to help them to amend their lives.

And this brings us to one other thing that needs observation. Perhaps *we* are the people who have trespassed against some one else, have hurt his feelings, have injured his property, have neglected him, have ill-used him. Do not let us make the saying of the Lord's Prayer harder to him than we can help. Before we bring our gift to the altar, let us be reconciled with our brother. If we have done wrong, let us be the first to ask pardon, to make amends. If we think he is foolishly sensitive, still let us rather err by being a little too kind than a little too harsh. The strong prosperous person can afford to yield a little in many cases. And,

above all, do not let us go on in fancied misunderstandings which a word or two might set right.

“Admonish a friend,” says the son of Sirach; “it may be he hath not done it, and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admonish thy friend; it may be he hath not said it, and if he have, that he speak it not again. Admonish a friend; for many times it is a slander, and believe not every tale. There is one that slippeth in his speech, but not from his heart; and who is he that hath not offended with his tongue?” (Ecclus. xix. 13-16).

“The mercy of man is toward his neighbour, but the mercy of the Lord is toward all flesh; He reproveth, and nurtureth, and teacheth, and bringeth again, as a shepherd his flock” (xviii. 14).

Lastly, let us remember the words of St. John in to-day's Epistle.<sup>1</sup> “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we *love* the brethren.” He who loves cannot chose but be forgiving; he who from his heart forgives,

<sup>1</sup> Second Sunday after Trinity, 1 John iii. 13.

and he alone, can say this prayer with a confidence that it will be heard by Him Who gives, and is, our Life ; and he alone can live spiritually who lives in love of God Who forgives him, and of man, whom he is ready to forgive.

## IX.

### LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

Read I Pet. v. 7-11.

WE have already seen how intimately the Lord's Prayer is bound up with the incidents of the Passion. We saw first how our Lord avowed Himself to be both Son of God and Son of man, and how He appealed to God His Father on the Cross. We have seen how the parables of the kingdom culminated in His wonderful last addresses at Jerusalem, in His words before Pilate, and how even on the cross the dying robber exclaimed, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." We know how "Thy will be done" was the keynote of the Agony; how the prayer for daily bread was lifted to a higher significance in the Eucharist; how *He* prayed, "Father, forgive them," even

when being nailed to the cross. And now we come to these words about temptation, and see how they, too, are echoed in His most affecting apostrophe to His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

The question naturally arises in all our minds, What *is* temptation, and is it a thing we ought to expect to escape?

The Greek word *πειρασμός* belongs to one of the most widely spread of roots—if, as seems probable, connected with the same family as the word *per* (through), which we find in ex-per-ior, per-iculum, and many Sanskrit, Greek, and Gothic words.

Trial is something we have to pass through as gold does through the fire, as substances do through chemical analysis.

"When He hath tried me," says Job, "I shall come forth as gold" (Job xxiii. 10; cf. 1 Pet. i. 7). Let us now open our Bibles and see in what shapes temptation is represented as coming to us in the New Testament, apart from our Lord's temptation, which is a great subject by



itself. In the parable of the sower, for instance (Luke viii. 13), we have it specially attacking those who have no root in themselves, no power of imbibing the moisture of spiritual grace. In 1 Cor. x. 13, temptation is of various kinds, and we are not told that God will give us immunity from it any more than He did to His chosen people, but if we trust Him, will give us a way of escape. In Gal. iv. 13, we are reminded that bodily disease and infirmity may be a temptation—a temptation to murmuring and restlessness on our own part, and perhaps a temptation to others to despise us. In 1 Tim. vi. 9, the love of riches is represented as a special temptation. In James i. 2, we are told we must expect to be tried by divers temptations, *ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς* (cf. 1 Pet. i. 6 for same phrase), and must even rejoice in the good fruits of this trial of faith. Yet we are *not* to say that we are tempted of God (ver. 13). St. Peter in his second Epistle, ii. 9, reminds us that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation; while in Heb. iv. 15, we have our Lord Himself in all points tempted like as we are. Finally, in

Rev. iii. 10, we have God's promise to keep the Church of Philadelphia in, or rather "from," the hour of temptation.<sup>1</sup>

From these texts, especially when compared with the history of the Fall, and also of the book of Job, we may gather that temptation is permitted but not commanded by God. At the same time, he who overcomes temptation has gained something which in the absence of temptation he could never have attained to. A great mystery lies behind all this, and it is difficult to speak on such a subject. But we must never allow ourselves to think that God *could not* have silenced and annihilated Satan had He chosen to do so. This would be to fall into Dualism. The problem of evil will never be understood on this side the grave ; but when we see the triumph of a noble character over temptation, we feel that it is a far better thing to be a soldier returning, though scarred and wounded from a bloody campaign, than one who has tarried peacefully at home.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Pet. iv. 12 (where the word *πειρασμὸς* is translated by "trial.")

Some, however, may say, "But God tempted Abraham." The case is not parallel. God made trial of Abraham's obedience by laying a very difficult command upon him. Had Abraham actually slain Isaac in obedience to God, it would not have been a sin, because God has a perfect right over all human life, to give it or to take it as seems good to Him. He did not suggest evil to him, as Satan did when he tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God. Suggestions of evil can only come from the Evil One, and they may come from quarters that seem almost diametrically opposed. We are tempted sometimes by prosperity, sometimes by adversity, sometimes by praise beyond our merits, sometimes by blame which is beyond our deserts, sometimes by wealth, sometimes by poverty, sometimes by popularity, sometimes by persecution, sometimes by disgrace, sometimes by flattery, sometimes by unbelief; sometimes again through, if not by, our very religious privileges themselves. "The Devil lurks behind the cross," is a terrible but true saying.

Sometimes Satan plays on one set of qualities

or proclivities in our nature, sometimes on another. The old makers of popular folk-lore had this feeling in their minds when in some of the fairy tales which have been handed down to childhood from the childhood of the race, the evil principle was made to assume all sorts of different disguises, the cruel stepmother who wishes to compass the maiden's death now coming to her hiding-place in one disguise, now in another, now practising on her life by one stratagem, now by another. Often when human nature seems most completely at play it betrays its sense of this versatility of evil, this many-colouredness of temptation in most unexpected ways, and no less so, of the duty of watchfulness which is thus implied.

Not the least remarkable thing about temptation is that what is innocuous for one person may be poisonous for another. Praise turns one person's head, on another it produces little or no effect. Wealth is a snare to the rich man in the gospel—Abraham seems to have passed through the same ordeal unharmed. Power is a snare for one character, a deepening of

responsibility for others. Is it not one of the arts of the tempter to make us fancy that because some one else has not fallen by a temptation, therefore we shall be sure to stand? How many things this might be applied to, from the coarser pleasures of our forefathers which the robust could indulge in while the weaker man fell a victim, to some subtler temptations in the present day! If we feel a thing is wrong for us, it matters little whether it be innocent for some one else.

When we look at life in its moral aspect we see two things plainly set before us. On the one hand, there is God's will, or let us say, our duty. We are perpetually being appealed to to do such and such things, as we have seen in the third petition of the Lord's Prayer.

But this is not all we have to reckon with. We must clearly bear in mind that it is possible to do a good many duties, and yet to fall into very grave temptations. The Pharisee in the parable is a strong instance of this. And we may fear that many among ourselves who when they go to bed at night can count over on their

fingers one accomplished duty after another, may yet have very great need to pray not to be led into temptation. How often, for instance, a nursing sister in a hospital who could give a long list of kind ministrations to her patients falls into the snare of speaking sharply to some fellow-worker.

Let me mention just a few temptations. Irritability with others who perhaps do not work quite on our lines, or in our way. Self-satisfaction, with that blunting of sympathy for others which so often accompanies it. Trust in self, rather than reliance on God. Perhaps a disposition to sacrifice means to ends, to be so anxious to attain some good object that we, as Shakspeare says, "to do a great right do a little wrong." Uncharitable judgments; want of consideration for other people's points of view. Perhaps thinking we are doing so much for God in some respects that He will not be very particular about our shortcomings in others; *e.g.* letting our practical duties swallow up all our time for prayer; or being very kind to those we love, but not quite upright and

sincere in our dealings with our neighbour ; or being very devout, and good to the poor, yet living on in some sinful habit. Impatience for results ; fretfulness under disappointment. But these and such as these are the temptations of the energetic and the active among us. Are there no other temptations to the timid, the slothful and the indifferent ?

Does not Satan come to us in the guise of a false humility ?—false humility, as Milton represents him doing to our Lord when he appeared an aged man in rural weeds—

“Following as seemed the quest of some stray ewe,  
Or withered sticks to gather, which might serve  
Against a winter’s day, when winds blow keen,  
To warm him wet returned from field at eve,”

or when he departs, baffled at the close—

“bowing low  
His gray dissimulation” (*Par. Reg.*, bk. i.).

Does not Satan, I say, often come wearing an air of lowliness, or inviting us to assume one—whispering in our ear that *we* are not the people to put ourselves forward—to exert ourselves—that *we* are only common-place, that third-class

carriages are the proper ones for us to ride in, that *we* need not feel any self-reproach when we hear of great acts, great efforts, great self-denials. We read of a man like Henry Martyn, the evangelist of India, and think we have settled everything by saying, "People like that are born saints; they belong to quite a different category from ourselves." We seem to think there is a kind of virtue in shirking anything that calls us to rise above an everyday level, and that we deserve credit for our very neglects of duty. I do wish, sometimes, some of us were a little more ambitious, a little more eager, about the best things. We do not seem to realize that Satan can tempt and does tempt people quite as much to be slothful and stupid in religion as he does to be proud and self-righteous. There is no more instructive passage in the "Pilgrim's Progress" than the picture of the enchanted ground. It has no grim figure of Apollyon with his darts, nor of Giant Despair with his bolts and bars, nor of the worldly seductions and bitter persecutions of "Vanity Fair"; the enemy is not seen, he is shapeless and impalpable, but



his power is on the heavy eyelids, the stupefied brain, the laggard limbs of every pilgrim who goes through the region and feels its dulling, deadening influence.

How many more temptations we might speak of!—ranging from the petty irritations which made the life of Hannah so hard to bear, to the sins which, as we have read to-day,<sup>1</sup> brought such an awful doom on Shiloh—worldliness, self-indulgence, jealousy, impurity, and the long list which St. Paul has given us when he speaks of the works of the flesh. Hardly a day, hardly an hour, passes without our being exposed to some temptation. It is very awful when we think of that restless energy of evil. Have we not felt it on some beautiful day, such as Easter Day perhaps, when everything has seemed so bright, so good, and then a bad thought or bad word has stolen in and spoilt our peace of mind and the harmony of our homes?

Have we not felt it sometimes on some sweet evening, when the stars are rising in the pure

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. Third Sunday after Trinity.

still sky as the sunset glow dies off, and some lovely line of poetry or music is ringing in our ears, if the thought has come that this very moment, perhaps in this very town, some soul or other is yielding to sin, is losing its spiritual ground, is sacrificing its one last chance—it may be a drunkard or gambler flinging his soul away with his last coin, or it may be a man of talent abusing his intellect to blaspheme the Giver—these things are equally Satan's work.

Or it may have been your lot, as it sometimes has been mine, to be walking on a summer's day in the suburbs of a large town, with walls of a gaol in close proximity to your path. I shall never forget a walk in one of the loveliest parts of North Italy, where nature had made a paradise of blue sky and bright flowers and lovely greenness, and within an enclosed space a few feet off, sentinel-guarded, and girt in by massive, dull brick walls, were all these human souls of prisoners, shut away from a world of beauty and goodness, and struggling with God knows what of bitterness and remorse, of vicious desires, of mocking and rebellious moods.

Scenes like these, my dear friends, give one a vivid sense of what temptation and the power of evil is to some natures. I trust none of us would pass such a place without a prayer for the poor souls inside, nor without thankfulness for our own spiritual blessings. But what we all should think of is that every little effort you and I make to resist *our* temptations *is* helping all human progress. The gaols would be emptier if *we* only were better people than we are. The fact that you are striving to be scrupulously upright now may help you at some critical moment to say the one true and brave word which will hinder some one else from committing a fraud on a large scale ; the fact that you are exercising fortitude and self-denial in some trifle now may help you or others to do some act of heroism in some Indian mutiny of the future ; the fact that you are trying to conquer petty irritability now may give that gentleness to your looks and words which some day may help you to get at the affections of a stubborn child, or to drag a poor lost woman from an abyss of sin. "Count it all joy," St. James says, "when

you fall in with (περιπέσητε)—find yourselves amongst, divers temptations. Let patience have her perfect work." It is joy if each conquered temptation is a stepping-stone on which you rise to higher things, and by means of which you may aid in raising others. And the harder the temptation the more blessed are those who, in God's strength, overcome it. "Blessed is the man who endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James i. 2, 13).

On the other hand, this Prayer teaches us that we are not ourselves to go in search of temptation. Our attitude ought to be that of this petition—"Lead us not into temptation." Do not, as it were, let us challenge God to allow us to be tempted. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

We have, in Goethe's "Faust," a striking picture of a restless soul which voluntarily places itself in the way of temptation. Surely the lesson is not one we can afford to neglect. If temptation

comes to us, it is one thing ; if we go after temptation, it is another. Joseph, for instance, was tempted in the house of Potiphar ; but he went thither without any will of his own, and God, Who allowed him to be thus tempted, delivered him in the hour of temptation. Balaam, on the other hand, went of his own accord, and against God's warning, to the house of Balak, and he miserably fell. He led *himself* into temptation.

Are none of us able to think of occasions in our own lives to which these examples might be applied ? When we *cannot* choose our company, we are, or may be, comforted by the thought of Joseph ; but when we *can*, and choose wrong, ought we not to be warned by Balaam ?

I should like to end by a few beautiful words from F. D. Maurice on the Lord's Prayer, p. 371, where he dwells on the words, "Lead *us* not into temptation," and shows that, as in all other petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we pray not for self alone, but for all our fellow men and women. "Our hearts" (he says) "bear witness to the Scripture assertion that we have

a common tempter and a common Deliverer ; that all things, though made the instruments of one, are yet actually and truly the instruments of the other ; that there must be such a cry from all hearts as this, and that it must be the most helpful and uniting of all cries, 'Lead us not into temptation.' O strange and mysterious privilege, that some bedridden woman in a lonely garret, who feels that she is tempted to distrust the love and mercy of Him who sent His Son to die for the helpless, should wrestle with that doubt, saying the Lord's Prayer ; and that she should be thus asking help for those who are dwelling in palaces, who scarcely dream of want, yet in their own way are in peril as great as hers ; for the student, who in his chamber is haunted with questions which would seem to her monstrous and incredible, but which to him are agonizing ; for the divine in his terrible assaults from cowardice, despondency, vanity, from the sense of his own heartlessness, from the shame of past neglect, from the appalling discovery of evils in himself which he has

denounced in others, from vulgar outward temptations into which he had proudly fancied that he could not fall, from dark suggestions recurring often that words have no realities corresponding to them, that what he speaks of may mean nothing because to him it has often meant so little. Of all this the sufferer knows nothing, yet for these she prays—and for the statesman who fancied that the world could be moved by his wires, and suddenly finds that it has wires of its own which move without his bidding; for her country under the pressure of calamities which the most skilful seek in vain to redress; for all other countries in their throes of anguish, which may terminate in a second death or a new life. For one and all she prays, ‘Lead us not into temptation.’ Their temptations and hers, different in form, are the same in substance. They, like her, are tempted to doubt that God is, and that He is the author of good, and not of evil, and that He is mightier than the evil, and that He can and will overthrow it, and deliver the universe out of it. This is the

real temptation ; there is no other. . . . Praying so, that which seemed to be poison becomes medicine ; all circumstances are turned to good ; honey is gathered out of the carcase, death itself is made the minister of life."



## X.

### BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

Read Epistle for Fourth Sunday after Trinity (Rom. viii. 18).

MUCH has been said and written about this most striking Epistle, and many are the trains of thought which might be deduced from it. We will take it for granted that some of these are already familiar to us, and we will try to-night to dwell primarily on one aspect of evil—on what may be called its allegorical aspect. Nothing, I suppose, is such a trial to our faith as the pain, evil, or suffering we see around us; nothing makes us so inclined to distrust the wisdom, and goodness, and power of God. Many of us have known dark hours in which a kind of despair and distrust has brooded over us, and it is to be feared, that

as we grow older and life grows harder, we are likely to know many more. Perhaps it will help us if we try to conceive of a world such as our own without pain and without suffering, but in other respects with its present moral conditions. I think we shall find that a very important element in our spiritual training has disappeared, with the disappearance of everything that can pain, shock, or distress us. We cannot *see* moral evil; even as things are now we are not nearly as alive as we ought to be to its heinousness; judge what it would be, then, when all those outward representations of evil which life at present is so full of, were withdrawn. Think, for instance, of all those sensations of horror and fear and loathing which are first aroused in us by physical means—the very words for which are primarily those of physical sensation—how much fainter they would be were we not prepared by physical causes of such sensations for experiencing them in moral and spiritual matters. It seems as if it had been God's will that we should have a very strong

sense of evil, and that as we developed we should transfer that sense from physical to moral ill. We shall be confirmed in this view if, with our Bibles in our hands, we take some of the more prominent forms of evil in the world and see how they are allegorized for us, if I may so say, in Holy Writ.

First we have various forms of disease—leprosy, with its fearfully infectious character, in which we can scarcely fail to see a type of sin; paralysis, with its deadening influence; epilepsy, scarcely distinguishable from demoniacal possession; blindness, deafness, and other maladies, each with its antitype in the spiritual world (see to-day's Gospel, Luke vi. 39). Then we have wild beasts—the lion, the serpent, the ravening wolf, the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke (Matt. vii. 15; xii. 34; Luke xiii. 32; Ps. xxii. 12-21). Then we have all the evils of storm, tempest, earthquake (Isa. xxiv. 19, 20; xxv. 4; xxviii. 17; lvii. 20, 21). Last of all, we have, of course, death, with all the horror we naturally feel of it. Now it is not merely Holy Scripture which uses these things, and

such things as these to bring evil very vividly before us. There is scarcely a poet in any age or country who has not done the same thing. Think, for instance, how Sophocles contrasts the literal blindness of Teiresias with the moral blindness of Oedipus; think how in every language and literature the emotion of anger is spoken of under some metaphor from natural storms, as when we speak of a lowering sky or a lowering countenance; think how often a character, whose bad passions resemble those of some wild animal, has been called after the creature he resembles. But I need hardly go into more details; we shall all agree, I am sure, in recognizing the fact that, however physical evil may pain and grieve us, it has a real, an important part to play in keeping constantly before our eyes the fact that there *is* an evil which we can neither see nor feel, which is alive and active in the world, and a thousand times more to be hated and shunned than death or torture itself.

Is it not well, especially in these easy-going days, that we should sometimes think that

though—as we possibly say—if *we* had the making of the world there would be no pain in it, yet that as we have *not* the making of the physical world, and there *is* a great deal of pain in it, so there may be—there must be—some awful analogies to all these things in our spiritual life? If moral evil in all its full horror were revealed to us, I doubt whether any of us would preserve our reason. The shuddering cry of Cassandra when she comes into the house of Atreus, is echoed by all humanity. Any of us who have known the indescribable shrinking which the scene of some great wrong, some ghastly tragedy, leaves in our minds, will be able to gain some dim conception of what it might be to look on the face of evil. Perhaps you will remember some lines in the “Christian Year” on our Lord’s sighing as He said the words, “Ephphatha,” to the deaf and dumb man, which illustrate this. There is a great disposition in the present day to deny the existence of Satan, and to explain away what in popular phraseology is called Hell. Let us remember it is one of the arts of the Evil One to try and make us

doubt his existence and his punishment. We hardly know how such solemn truths can be emphasized more than by that awful physical suffering we see around us. Can we suppose that the innocent suffer so much, and that the guilty will be spared? Can we suppose that blunders with regard to bodily health, perhaps the carelessness of mother or nurse, will be visited, as they are, on our bodies, and that the soul will not have to pay a fearfully heavy penalty for unrepented sin? You will not quarrel with me, I am sure, if I speak to you with the deepest possible earnestness, intensified by the knowledge that this is my last opportunity of speaking to many of you at all, on a subject which concerns us all so nearly. The whole tendency of our age is to water down the solemn teaching of Scripture about evil on the one hand, and on the other to entertain and stimulate itself with pictures of evil—a sign, as Ruskin very wisely pointed out long ago, of a decadence of literary taste, and a corresponding decay in morals. Looking back, as we can do, on the literature of England for

the last half century, nothing strikes one more than the audacity with which at this moment people play with very serious subjects. Nothing is too grave, nothing is too horrible, nothing is too coarse, while, on the other hand, nothing is too venerable to be made the subject of a feuilleton. Calvary is not too sacred, the unseen world is not too awful for the profaning touch of a writer in search of a new sensation. All this tends to blunt our feelings in the end, though it may seem to stimulate them in the beginning. Some things should be thought about, and prayed about, but rarely talked about; and surely sin, human responsibility, the terrible future which we cannot escape by chattering thoughtlessly or half laughing about it, or even by letting our imaginations play around it in unwarrantable ways, belong to this category. A dark abyss is no less an abyss, because when we lean over it we only see the reflection of our own faces and their transient moods, and there *is* a dark—a very dark—abyss for souls. God keep us from thinking or speaking of it with levity!

But this truth is not only taught us by our own experience. The Bible most distinctly tells us that there is an evil personality in the universe—a conscious power which wills our harm. The Church catechism, in explaining this petition, follows up the mention of “all sin and wickedness” by that of “our ghostly enemy.” The subject of the personality of Satan is a very awful one, and cannot be fully treated here.<sup>1</sup>

We see in some human characters a love of evil for its own sake; we see what we call fiendish, or diabolical, or satanic qualities in some natures. Whence is their source? Not in human nature itself. “I find, then, a law,” says St. Paul, in the chapter preceding that from which we are now reading, “that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. vii. 19–21).

Here is human nature actually confessing that there is some outside force which is brought to bear upon it through its “members” which

<sup>1</sup> May I refer to my book on the Decalogue, chap. iii.?



makes it do the very things it would avoid, and neglect the very things it would do.

"Who shall deliver me"—*τίς με ρύσεται*—the very words of the Lord's Prayer, "from the body of this death?"

Well may we pray, "Deliver us from evil;" deliver us from the evil one. Not only from evil as an abstraction, but from Satan as a personal self-conscious being, from the evil will which is always opposing and trying to thwart the Will of God. Whatever our theories may be on this subject, sure we are of this, that no one can honestly accept Christianity and disbelieve in the existence of Satan. To say nothing of the history of the Temptation, let us consider how often our Lord's own words refer to it (Matt. xii. 26; xiii. 39; Luke xxii. 31; John viii. 44).

In brief, we must face the fact that so long as we are in the world we must be prepared to go on struggling with a conscious, restless, swift, mocking, malignant, subtle, and untiring power of evil. We must *not* expect to have an easy life. Before we die we shall probably

have some very hard fights, some very hard struggles. There is no escaping them. Some one was telling me the story, which has quite lately been published, of a young officer who said that when the fighting fairly began, his first impulse was to run out of it as fast as he could. Then he looked up and saw that was exactly what his men were preparing to do. He checked himself at once, and began exhorting his men also to stand firm. This is just what we must do. We must stand firm ourselves, and do our best to keep others steady. Doubtless it is a trying thought that evil and suffering must be faced, that shells and bullets are whizzing all around us, and that our own heads may be the next on which one will alight. But think what St. Paul says in this Epistle. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

The depth of the evil is but a very imperfect and inadequate measure of the height of the good. Our Lord faced the whole horror of evil

in the world—not like the hero of old who, lest he should be turned to stone, bent his eyes away from the Gorgon, and only saw her image in his shield—nay, He looked evil in the face and still survived. And shall not we draw courage from His victory? Heap up before your mind's eye all the evil, all the conflict you can possibly suffer; spare no touch from the imaginary picture, veil nothing, soften down nothing—and be sure that if you yourself are only true, only courageous, the evil will *not* be allowed to overwhelm you, the enemy will not be able to do you violence, the son of wickedness shall not hurt you. Nay, far more than that, this gross and awful mass of evil is a mere molehill when compared with the mountain heights of glory and joy with which the apostle contrasts it. The bondage of corruption is finite, the glorious liberty of the sons of God is infinite.

But there is one other aspect of evil which the Catechism speaks of, and that is “everlasting death.” Now we know with regard to physical evil, that it can be triumphed over, and that good can be brought out of it. But the

awful part of physical death is that—humanly speaking—it can *not* be triumphed over. As the old proverb says, “There is a remedy for everything but death.” By the very nature of things, death shuts the door, as it were, in our face. Judging, therefore, by analogy, everlasting death—the death of the soul, of which the death of the body is a type—must be something from which there is no recovery. You may be able to alleviate pain, at any rate a person in pain may show great heroism, and win your sympathy and admiration—but a dead body is another thing, be it that of your dearest friend, all you can do is to put it underground as soon as you decently may. We know what the death of the body is, it is when the soul departs from it ; we know what a blank of horror supervenes, but who shall tell us what the death of the soul is? Powerlessness to do either good or evil, sickening corruption, hopeless, irresistible decay.

But, it will be said, “the dead neither feel nor know ; there is nothing after all so very terrible in this idea of spiritual death.” Alas, we are

very far from being able to affirm that because the body, which is a material thing, loses consciousness when the soul departs from it, therefore the soul, which is an immaterial thing, does the same. The essence of the body is matter, which does not cease to be, but only becomes hatefully corrupt at death—but if the essence of the soul be consciousness . . . alas, what shall we say? We *can* say nothing, because we know nothing, we must leave it in God's hands ; only do not let us trifle with our own lives under the ill-grounded idea that our souls will lose consciousness when they quit the body ; because this idea is due to a confusion of thought which ascribes to the soul at and after physical death the same unconsciousness which only befalls the body *because* it is bereft of the soul.

On the other hand, herein lies our greatest comfort, if we are trying to serve God, when we have to face physical death in our own persons or that of others. It is so natural to identify a man with his body that (despite the half-playful warning of Socrates to Crito) we often

speak of "burying such and such a one," when the very thing that makes the burial of the body necessary, is that the man or woman no longer inhabits it. We see this sickening view of death pretty frequently in old ballads, and also, where it is less excusable, in some morbid unwholesome poetry of the present century, which need not be quoted.

But should it not be a great help and support to us when we mourn our departed ones, and also in those hours which come to us in sickness (and possibly also in health) when we look at our own limbs, and figure to ourselves the day when they will be laid straight and stiff in a coffin, and the rain will drip and the snow lie above them through long days and lonely nights; ought it not to be a comfort to us to reflect that it is *because all consciousness* has left them that these ghastly things are possible—that the very moment the soul departs, though the survivors may have all the melancholy funeral rites to pay (and among Christians and for Christians these surely should be full of reverent hopefulness), yet

the "dead" man or woman is by the very fact of death emancipated from the torture of pain, the disgusts of disease and weakness, and the terror of the grave. The mourners see the coffin lowered into the dark vault, but he or she whom they worthily mourn is "gone into the world of light."

The "earnest expectation of the creature" will not be disappointed, the groans and travails will be forgotten, in the birth to immortality; and the "deliverance from evil" will be complete, through Jesus Christ Who triumphed over sin and death, that we might live with Him for ever.

The Lord's Prayer, as frequently used in our Churches, concludes with a doxology, which may be found in Matt. vi. 13.<sup>1</sup> It possibly dates from the second century, but it is so beautiful in itself, and has—like the Glorias after the Psalms—been consecrated by the use of so many devout souls, that we may well continue to repeat it, reminding us as it does of the eternity of that glory of God which the

<sup>1</sup> Omitted in Revised Version.

first petition teaches us to seek, of that kingdom in which His will is to be done, and of His power to strengthen, and pardon, and deliver us from our spiritual enemy. It was beautifully said by St. Augustine that this Prayer has been repeated by those who came before us, and will be repeated by those who come after us ; and, in saying this Doxology, we may feel that we are joining in a chorus where our voices blend with those of the faithful departed, and which will be swelled to greater fulness by ages yet unborn. All glory be to God ! Amen.

THE END.



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